Buddhism as a Stronghold of free Thinking?

Social, Ethical and Philosophical Dimensions of Buddhism

Edited by
Siegfried C.A. Fay and Ilse Maria Bruckner

edition ubuntu

First published: September 2011

eBook: ISBN-13: 978-3-9814754-0-1
Print: ISBN-13: 978-3-9814754-1-8

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www.sankt-mauritius.org
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Printed in Germany by Leibi.de, Neu-Ulm
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Acknowledgements

The editors would like to acknowledge the valuable advice given by a number of friends, among them Dr. Alfred Weil. Dr. Weil also established contact with the *Mahabodhi Buddhistische Begegnungsstätte Familie H. Euler-Stiftung* Foundation located in Lindenfels, Germany, who funded the printing of this volume. We also thank Aditya Goel of Aditya Prakashan Publishers for the smooth handling of the publishing process. Prof. Dr. Gerhard Preyer has earned our gratitude by initiating this project and by the confidence placed in us when he suggested we take sole responsibility for finishing the volume. In particular, the book has benefited from the constructive criticisms offered by those who reviewed the contributions. Last but not least we wish to thank all the contributors for their understanding and patience during the years it took to complete this project.*

Nüsttal, Biosphere Reserve Rhön, December 2010
Siegfried C.A. Fay Ilse Maria Bruckner

* Due to circumstances for which the editors are not responsible, this volume could not be printed and published as planned by Aditya Prakashan editors, but another solution had to be found. Though this delayed the publishing date, we hope that we have arrived at a satisfactory result. The editors, end of August 2011.

Contributors

Bhikkhu Anālayo was born in Germany and ordained in Sri Lanka in 1995. In the year 2000 he completed a Ph.D. thesis on the Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta at the University of Peradeniya (published by Windhorse in the UK). In the year 2007 he completed a habilitation research at the University of Marburg, in which he compared the *Majjhima-nikāya* discourses with their Chinese, Sanskrit, and Tibetan counterparts. At present, he is a member of the Centre for Buddhist Studies, University of Hamburg, as a *Privatdozent* (the German equivalent to an associate professorship), and works as a researcher at Dharma Drum Buddhist College, Taiwan. Besides his academic activities, he regularly teaches meditation in Sri Lanka.

Karl-Heinz Brodbeck studied electronics and microwaves in Augsburg (Germany) and worked as an electrical engineer for an international company before he pursued a second course of studies in philosophy and economics at the University at Munich, where he became an Assistant professor. He was Research Fellow at the Ifo-Institut (*Institute for Economic Research*), Munich, and executive of a market research company. Since 1992 he has held a professorship for Economics and Creativity Research at the University of Applied Sciences (Würzburg, Germany) and at the Hochschule für Politik (University at Munich). He has been a Buddhist practitioner for thirty years. Main publications: *Der Spiel-Raum der Leerheit* [The Creative Space of Emptiness], 1995; *Entscheidung zur Kreativität* [Decision in favour of Creativity. Ways out of the Labyrinth of Habits], 1995; *Die fragwürdigen Grundlagen der Ökonomie* [The Questionable Basis of Economy. A Philosophical Criticism of Modern Economies], 2009; *Buddhistische Wirtschaftsethik* [Buddhist Economic Ethics], 2002; Der Zirkel des Wissens [The Circle of

Knowledge], 2002; *Die Herrschaft des Geldes* [The Reign of Money], 2009.

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Silja Graupe is Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Economics at Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences, Germany. Dr. Graupe's research interests: the critique and reformulation of economics from intercultural perspectives, philosophy and ethics of economics, modern Japanese philosophy, Daoist philo-

sophy. Major publications: *The Basho of Economics, An Intercultural Analysis of the Process of Economics* (Frankfurt: Ontos 2007); 'Nishida and the Dynamic Nature of Knowledge' in: *Frontiers in Japanese Philosophy 3*, Jim Heisig (ed.), Nagoya: Nanzan 2008, pp. 209-237.

Barbara Kameniar is program coordinator of the Master of Teaching (Secondary) program in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. She has a longstanding interest in the role of women in religion, the Mae Chi in Thailand and in Religious Education. Her interest in the Mae Chi dates back to the early 1990s when she undertook a micro-ethnographic study of a small group of Mae Chi in a semi-rural Wat. Dr. Kameniar's most recent research examines a tertiary education program for Mae Chi. In 2008 she was invited to give the prestigious Penny Magee lecture in which spoke about her recent work with the Mae Chi and outlined her thinking regarding the contribution Agamben's work might make to re-examining the position of the Mae Chi in Thai Society. The lecture was published in the *Australian Religion Studies Review*. Elements of that argument are also covered in the chapter in this volume.

Sallie B. King is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at James Madison University. She is the author of *Buddha Nature* (SUNY Press, 1991), *Journey in Search of the Way: The Spiritual Autobiography of Satomi Myodo* (SUNY Press, 1993), *Being Benevolence: The Social Ethics of Engaged Buddhism* (Hawaii, 2005), and *Socially Engaged Buddhism* (Hawaii, 2009). She is co-editor (with Christopher S. Queen) of *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (SUNY Press, 1996) and (with Paul O. Ingram) *The Sound of Liberating Truth: Buddhist-Christian Dialogues in Honor of Frederick J. Streng* (Curzon Press, 1999).

Charles S. Prebish holds the Charles Redd Chair in Religious Studies at Utah State University. He came to Utah State University following more than thirty-five years on the faculty of the Pennsylvania State University. He has published twenty-one books and more than seventy-five scholarly articles and chapters. His books *Buddhist Monastic Discipline* (1975) and *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America* (1999) are considered classic volumes in Buddhist Studies. Dr. Prebish is the leading pioneer in the establishment of the study of Western Buddhism as a sub-discipline in Buddhist Studies. In 1993 he held the Visiting Numata Chair in Buddhist Studies at the University of Calgary, and in 1997 was awarded a Rockefeller Foundation National Humanities Fellowship for research at the University of Toronto. Dr. Prebish has been an officer in the International Association of Buddhist Studies, and was co-founder of the Buddhism Section of the American Academy of Religion. In 1994, he co-founded the Journal of Buddhist Ethics, which was the first online peer-reviewed journal in the field of Buddhist Studies; and in 1996, co-founded the Routledge 'Critical Studies in Buddhism' series. In 2005, he was honoured with a 'festschrift' volume by his colleagues titled *Buddhist Studies from India to America: Essays in Honor of Charles S. Prebish*.

Editors

Ilse Maria Bruckner is a state examined translator of English and German and a member of the German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators (BDÜ). Having worked as a freelancer for over twenty years, she has done translations mainly in the fields of business and law, specializing on development projects, the Humanities with a focus on education, re-

ligion and philosophy, and medicine. She studied Sanskrit and Pāli at J.W. Goethe University at Frankfurt am Main. In the fields of education, naturopathy and Buddhism, she also works as an interpreter. Publications include her German translation (with Siegfried C.A. Fay) of Bhikkhu Anālayo's thesis *Satipaṭṭhāna. The Direct Path to Realization* (German title: *Der direkte Weg – Satipaṭṭhāna*, Stammbach: Beyerlein & Steinschulte, 2010), and her partial German translation of a collection of essays by Florian Palzinsky (Samanera Pajalo), *Wie ein Fremder im Paradies* [Like a Stranger in Paradise], edited by Bruckner translation services (publisher: edition innsalz, 1st edition 2004, 3rd edition 2009).

Siegfried C.A. Fay, M.A. studied philosophy, theology, German, and education at Gutenberg University in Mayence and J.W. Goethe University at Frankfurt am Main. Postgraduate studies of Sanskrit and Pāli, sociology, philosophy of religion, science of religion, and New Testament. He is a member of the Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society, Collegium Biblicum München, Internationale Ludwig Wittgenstein Gesellschaft, and the Pali Text Society. He published the first German monograph on Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, collaborated in editing New Testament studies and publications of Collegium Biblicum München, and wrote articles on Buddhism for the Thai monastery Wat Puttabenjapon in Germany. He is co-translator of Bhikkhu Anālayo's thesis *Satipaṭṭhāna. The Direct Path to Realization* into German.

Preface

It is both the authors' and the editors' wish that this volume be read by a wider public so that not only experts in Indology and Buddhist Studies, but also readers from various different backgrounds may take an interest in the subjects discussed. This is why we have taken an interdisciplinary approach when compiling the contributions to this collection of articles, ensuring that specialist knowledge of register and terminology is not required in order to understand them.

This volume is the outcome of international and even transcontinental cooperation involving expert authors from Asia, Australia, Europe and the U.S.A. Its editors work in central Europe, printing and publishing took place in India, and distribution of the book is worldwide.

Generally, we have spelled Pāli and Sanskrit words using diacritical marks, but wherever they have been used as loan words by the authors as, for example, 'nirvana' or 'sangha', we have dropped the diacritics.

To conclude, we hope that our anthology will provide materials which might inspire the reader to look at some questions of global concern from a new angle and that, in this context, this will provide a stimulus for developing a freethinking attitude.

The Editors.

Introduction by the Editors

Can Buddhism be called a stronghold of free thinking? The editors were confronted with this question when they asked themselves what relevance Buddhism might have for social developments in the twenty-first century and where it will position itself in these processes. This approach arose from the fact that this collection of articles had initially been planned for publication by an interdisciplinary journal of sociology. The development the volume took from this starting point to its completion was dynamic as well as challenging and, as may happen with any lively process, it had a tendency to develop a momentum of its own.

It is likely that posing this question is typical of editors with a European background: this is a continent where, for centuries, individual free thinking has been emphasized and celebrated as an outstanding accomplishment of the human mind. This is especially so today, when free thinking is of particular importance for human societies confronted with global challenges such as the destruction of the environment, waves of refugees, armed conflicts and the disintegration of traditional social structures, making us search for solutions that are creative, original and fundamentally new.[1] Especially in Europe, we find that new problems cannot be solved using the old methods. Consequently, we search for innovative and inspiring ideas. When seeking new paths we often find that we find support by returning to original human qualities as a basis for developing freedom of mind. What contribution might Buddhism make here?

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[1] See e.g., *Globale Trends 2010. Frieden – Entwicklung – Umwelt*. Ed. by Tobias Debiel et al. (Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden / Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden). Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer, 2010; Peter Meyns (ed.), *Handbuch Eine Welt. Entwicklung im globalen Wandel*. Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 2009; Claus Leggewie / Harald Welzer, *Das Ende der Welt, wie wir sie kannten. Klima, Zukunft und die Chancen der Demokratie*, Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer, 2009.

According to our present-day knowledge, the historical Buddha initiated an emancipatory movement where philosophical thought, meditation techniques and ethical conduct were combined with a pragmatic doctrine of self-salvation which, as was to be expected, mainly attracted 'religious virtuosi' but did not aim at bringing about mass conversions or social upheavals. In retrospect, the cultural and historical conditions of the Buddha's teaching were conducive to developing an attitude of freedom of mind and free thinking: The European philosophical dilemma of 'freedom or determinism',[2] a problem to which Benjamin Libet's experiments have drawn renewed attention,[3] was not posed by ancient Indian thinkers because of their view of causality[4] nor among Buddhist thinkers because of the concept of dependent origination (Pāli: *paṭiccasamuppāda*, Sanskrit: *pratītyasamutpāda*).[5]

[2] Cf. Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha taught*. Reprint: Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Center, 1996 [= 2nd and enl. ed. 1967; 1st ed.: London / Bedford: Gordon Frazer, 1959], 54. For an overview see Robert Kane (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*. Oxford: OUP, 2002.

[3] Gerhard Roth, Homo neurobiologicus – ein neues Menschenbild? In: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschehen* (APuZ) 44-45/2008: Hirnforschung, p. 6-12; Franz M. Wuketits, Die Illusion des freien Willens. In: ibid., p. 3-5; download: http://www.bpb.de/publikationen. About the quasi-religiouos 'belief in free will' cf. Daniel C. Dennett. *Breaking the Spell. Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*. New York: Viking, 2006 (German ed.: Frankfurt/M. / Leipzig: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2008), Chapter 8.1.

[4] See Edward Conze, *Buddhist Thought India*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 2nd ed. 1983, esp. Part II, Chapter 2.3 (German ed.: *Buddhistisches Denken*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1988 / Insel, 2007, 203-225).

[5] See Rahula, *What the Buddha taught* (see note 2), 53-55, cf. Bhikkhu Pāsādika, Grundpositionen des Buddhismus zum Problem der menschlichen Willensfreiheit. In: Uwe an der Heiden / Helmut Schneider (eds.), *Hat der Mensch einen freien Willen? Die Antwort der großen Philosophen*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2007, 309-323, esp. 315 and 319-320; Hans Wolfgang Schumann, *The historical Buddha*. Delhi: Motilal

In Early Buddhism, concepts such as theism, ritualism and clericalism were rejected,[6] which was intellectually and existentially liberating; in the same way, it avoided asceticism and hedonism,[7] leaving room for a way of life that, as a 'middle way', is liberated from extremes.

Early Buddhism's pragmatic view of salvation and its intention to free speculative thought from constraints are illustrated by famous similes, such as that of teaching as a raft[8] and the simile of the poisoned arrow[9]. Seemingly, it was alien to the Buddha's nature to make other men or women dependent on him or his teaching, as is pointed out by some traditions.[10] Though he considered himself to be merely a 'discoverer' of a supra-personal truth,[11] he nevertheless regarded this salvational knowledge as definitive, in contrast to the modern idea of a falsifiable theory or research hypothesis as expounded for example by Karl R. Popper. This should also be taken into account when the famous *Kālāma Sutta*, which is very popular among

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Banarsidass, 2004, 139 (New German ed.: 2004, 161). As an introduction to Dependent Origination, see Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism. Teachings, history, practices*. Cambridge: CUP, 1990, 54-60.

[6] See, e.g., Konrad Meisig, *Klang der Stille. Der Buddhismus*. Freiburg, Basle, Vienna: Herder, 2nd ed. 1997, 23-68; Klaus Mylius, Der Buddhismus, seine Lehre und seine Geschichte. In: K. M. (ed., transl.): *Die vier edlen Wahrheiten. Texte des ursprünglichen Buddhismus.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 1998, 34-40.

[7] See, e.g., Meisig, *Klang der Stille* (see note 6), 68-74.

[8] MN 22, PTS I 135. On this, see the contribution by Sallie B. King.

[9] MN 63, PTS I 429.

[10] Schumann, *The historical Buddha* (see note 5), 92 (new German ed.: 112), points out: 'We hear several times of how Gotama instructed new followers to continue to give alms to the monks of the school they had left (e.g. Mv 6.31.10f.)'; cf. Uma Chakravarti, *Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism.* Reprint: New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1996, 60-61.

[11] Cf. SN 12.65, PTS I 106.

Western Buddhists, is quoted.[12] Yet even if this tradition could not be traced back to the historical Buddha – an approach that has also been considered already[13] –, it would still be in accordance with its founder's intention and the spirit of Early Buddhism; furthermore, it may be presumed that the tradents and text compilers realized how the Master's recommendations could also be applied to the teaching itself, especially in criticism of that teaching, as several passages of the Pāli Canon point out explicitly that self-contradiction is an argumentation error.[14] Even today, texts like the *Kālāma Sutta* or the famous simile of the blind men and the elephant[15] are illuminating both in a historical context and for present-day world development as they prove that already in ancient India there was not only a religious and ideological 'market' and competition among various sects and systems of thought, but also a co-existence of different sects that was mostly non-violent. Yet the ideal of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) and tolerance was by no means a characteristic of Buddhism, but belonged to 'the wonder that was India' and stands in contrast to present-day developments in India and elsewhere[16]. As the above-mentioned texts show, this tolerance

[12] AN 3.65 [Thai: 3.66], PTS III 189. On this, see the contributions by Guang Xing and Sallie B. King. On criticism of the *Kālāma-Sutta* and of the reception of Walpola Rahula's *What the Buddha taught,* see Colin Edwards, Rahula and the Liberal Buddha. In: *Buddhist Studies Review*, Vol. 25 (2008), pp. 232-243. This article was available only after the editorial deadline and could not be considered by the contributors.

[13] Not considered by Edwards, see previous note.

[14] See e.g. MN 56, PTS 378.

[15] Ud 6.4, PTS 66-69.

[16] See Claudia Derichs / Andrea Fleschenberg (eds.), *Religious Fundamentalisms and Their Gendered Impacts in Asia*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung: Berlin 2010 (download: http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/07061.pdf); Mark Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion. Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to al Qaeda*. The Regents of the University of California, 2008 (German ed.: Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2009).

also included phenomena such as 'patchwork religiosity' or 'believing without belonging' as described today by sociologists of religion[17]: one could still be religious in a traditional way, but there was the additional option of making one's own choice.[18] Buddhism's inclusivist features supported such an attitude.

Still, the approach of interpreting rebirth and the deed-result-connection as quasi-natural laws, without resorting to gods, spirits, demons or celestial bodies, may be regarded as demythologization.[19] The same applies to the interpretation of the destructive driving forces of humans: it is not angels or devils that act on the stage of human consciousness, prompting us to commit good or evil deeds, but the impersonal forces of greed, aversion and delusion that determine human action. It is this demythologized view which, for example through training in mindfulness, may lead to profound changes in the behaviour of the individual who, then, will not need to retreat into mental defence mechanisms.

This volume with its collection of eight contributions highlights different aspects of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna traditions, for example Early Buddhism[20], Theravāda Buddhism in Southeast Asia,[21] and Zen-Buddhism[22]. All these approaches share a fundamental orientation towards rationality, the use of logical-philosophical argumentation and the cultivation of logical discourse, though they cannot be reduced to this concept since,

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[17] Cf. Oliver Roy, *La Sainte Ignorance. Le temps de la religion sans culture*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2008 (German ed..: Munich: Siedler, 2010); Claus Leggewie, Religion und transnationale Weltgesellschaft. In: Meyns (ed.), *Handbuch* (see note 1), 194-201; Claus Leggewie, Weltmacht Religion? In: *Globale Trends 2010* (see note 1), 61-80.

[18] Cf. Schumann, *The historical Buddha* (see note 5), 92 (new German ed.: 112).

[19] Cf. Hans Wolfgang Schumann, *Siebzig Schlüsselbegriffe des Pāli-Buddhismus*. Heidelberg: Werner Kristkeitz, 2006, 56 and 67.

[20] See the contributions by Bhikkhu Anālayo und Guang Xing.

[21] See the contributions by Barbara Kameniar and Sallie B. King.

[22] See the contributions by Ashby Butnor and Silja Graupe.

besides its philosophy, 'Buddhism' also comprises a psychological, a religious and, last but not least, a cultural system.[23] Which of these sub-systems will prevail depends on socio-economical and political tendencies, movements in the history of ideas, and intellectual trends. In contrast to systems labelled 'world religions', the system which European traditions understood 'Buddhism' to be did not begin as a 'religion', if we conceive religion to be a system of cults and rituals whose purpose is to dispose gods, saviours or prophets favourably towards what their adepts may wish for individually or collectively, but as a part of the movement of non-Brahmanical travelling mendicants (Sanskrit: *śramaṇa*, Pāli: *samaṇa*) of ancient India.[24] Thus, a movement that has its roots in asceticism is likely to be able to provide solutions for global problems arising mainly from the waste of resources and the failed ideology of 'boundless economic growth'.

However, it is not the editors' intention to support an idealization of Buddhism[25] as, regrettably, in the course of its history several of its advocates have propagated violence in words and deeds.[26] Nonetheless, neither the Buddha's way of life (and that

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[23] 'Evidently at no stage of its history was Buddhism a homogenous movement' (Perry Schmidt-Leukel, *Understanding Buddhism*. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2006, 2).

[24] Cf. K.R. Norman, *A Philological Approach to Buddhism*. Lancaster: Pali Text Society, 2nd ed. 2006, 37-38; Richard Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism. A Social history from ancient Benares to modern Colombo*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd ed. 2006, Chapter 2.

[25] As is well known, Europeans have been searching for a peaceful and reasonable religion since the Enlightenment, a quest during which projections occur, cf. the critical remarks by Michael von Brück, *Einführung in den Buddhismus*, Frankfurt/M. / Leipzig: Verlag der Weltreligonen, 2007, 19.

[26] See Mark Juergensmeyer / Michael K. Jerryson (eds.), *Buddhist Warfare*, Oxford: OUP, 2010; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion* (see note 16), Chapter 3, section: *Buddhist Revolts in Southeast Asia*. – Prior introductions and presentations usually evade the phenomenon of 'violence in Buddhism'; for an exception and historical examples,

of his first disciples) nor the canonical scriptures of Early Buddhism provide any legitimization for any kind of violence: an attitude of committed pacifism was taught and practised in these groups.[27] Buddhism's pacifism, its affinity to applied psychology and its openness to scientific questions and social, political, economic and ecological problems are reasons why, among others, individuals and groups from Western cultures are attracted by it. This attraction takes the most different forms, for example as an ethos, a stimulus for social critique, or a way of life.[28] The articles in this volume address these and

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see Hans Jürgen Greschat, *Die Religion der Buddhisten.* Munich / Basle: Reinhardt, 1980, 117-118, 185-186, 193-198, 200-201.

Revealing insights into Buddhism in real life are provided by two Western Buddhist monks, Dhammika und Pajalo: Shravasti Dhammika, *The Broken Buddha. Critical Reflections on Theravada and a Plea for a New Buddhism*, 2006 (download: http://www.buddhistische-gesellschaft-berlin.de/downloads/brokenbuddhanew.pdf); Florian Palzinsky (Samanera Pajalo), *Wie ein Fremder im Paradies*, 3rd and rev. German ed., Ranshofen, Austria: edition innsalz, 2009 (first, shorter version: *Like a Stranger in Paradise.* Ratmalana, Sri Lanka: Savodaya Vishva Lekha Publication, 2000); download: http://www.simple-wisdom.net/Image/file/Pdfs,%20Essays/Like_a_Stranger_in_Paradise_7Essays_S_Pajalo.pdf).

[27] An often repeated phrase in the Pāli Canon says: 'Abandoning the taking of life, he dwells refraining from taking life, without stick or sword, scrupulous, compassionate, trembling for the welfare of all living beings' (cf. DN 1, PTS I 4; transl. following M. Walshe, 1996, p. 68). In the simile of the saw (MN 21, PTS I 129), the principle of peaceableness is illustrated as follows: 'Bhikkhus, even if bandits were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handled saw, he who gave rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be carrying out my teaching. Herein, bhikkhus, you should train thus: 'Our minds will remain unaffected, and we shall utter no evil words; we shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, without inner hate. […].' That is how you should train, bhikkhus.' (transl. by Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi, 1995, p. 223).

[28] As long as, in the West, sociologists and theologists hand down stereotypes like those saying that Buddhism can be reduced to 'Weltflucht' (Max Weber) and is 'anti-social' in general (Albert Schweitzer),

other issues in various forms, presenting Buddhism as a true stronghold of free thinking in theory and practice and thus make an inspiring contribution to intercultural and interreligious dialogue.[29] At the very least, it is the editors' wish that this book will motivate and encourage all those who seek for new answers to urgent questions that still need to be solved.

About the individual contributions:

Outcasts should not be regarded as victims, but rather as pioneers in quest of new ways of life: this suggestion is made by Barbara Kameniar with her contribution based on field studies she has made over the last twenty years. She discusses the situation of the so-called *mae chis* (female Buddhist lay practitioners) in Thailand and, taking their perspective, discusses the ordination of Buddhist nuns and the function women have in the Sangha. A critical light is cast on the foundation of the order of nuns by the Buddha and on the role of women in religion, arguing that their comparatively low status is in no adequate proportion to the importance of women in practice for the maintenance of Buddhism as a religion. From the conditions experienced by the *mae chis* the author draws conclusions about the general situation of persons outside social structures, for

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the socio-ethical, social-psychological and socio-political relevance of Buddha's teaching will not become visible; cf. Hans Julius Schneider, *Religion*. Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 2008, 110. On social relevance, see here the contributions by Ashby Butnor, Barbara Kameniar, and Sallie B. King; on implications of Buddhism concerning economy, see the contributions by Karl-Heinz Brodbeck and Silja Graupe.

[29] 'Today there is no culture, be it Asian or European, African or Latin-American, which can move exclusively within the boundaries of its own tradition without becoming provincial' (Ram Adhar Mall, *Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen*. Darmstadt: WBG, 1995, 23; our translation). For concrete examples of cross-cultural relevance, see the contributions by Sallie B. King and Charles S. Prebish.

example that of refugees excluded from power. Nevertheless, the article opens a perspective of hope: '[…] rather than feel pity for the *mae chi*, or continue to argue that their position is untenable, perhaps we can begin to examine their lives and their choices for what insights they provide us with for re-imagining a 'paradigm of a new historical consciousness […].'

Intense body consciousness strengthens the faculty of empathy and the resulting readiness for compassionate action. This is the core message of Ashby Butnor's article. Taking an attitude of free thinking and the practice of Zen as a basis, the author develops approaches to self-emancipation from uncritically accepted conditions[30]. Buddhism is known for its cultivation of the mind; Zen includes the body in the experience of awakening. The author expresses her wish for a more intense resonance between individuals and their environment or rather the society in which they live, meaning a compassionate, ethical way of action. 'Social values affect our moral perception. We may not recognize certain forms of suffering as suffering if we have been trained to be inattentive to their existence.' A description is provided of a strategy to free oneself from isolation and limited perception resulting from an overemphasis of the mind by, among other things, harmonizing body and mind so that one's perception and empathy are intensified. Such a process will have social consequences because interaction changes accordingly. There are cross-references to current issues such as feminism and problems of social exclusion. In the view of the editors, Butnor's contribution shows clearly how, in practice, compassion will counteract any forms of cruelty, a concept that can also be found in the Abhidhamma literature[31].

[30] For example, rejection of the body in some religious and philosophical systems. (Editors' note).
[31] Cf. Bhikkhu Bodhi, *A comprehensive manual of Abhidhamma – The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha*. BPS: Kandy, 1993, 90.

Sallie B. King presents free thinking within the Buddha's teaching as the foundation of Engaged Buddhism, in particular by reference to three outstanding and internationally-recognised figures from Asia and the U.S.A. She explains how underlying principles of free thinking can already be found in the Buddha's teaching, how free thinking is encouraged there and how, in Engaged Buddhism, it results in concrete action. Buddhadāsa is mentioned especially as a representative of a Buddhist modernism which interprets Buddhism as a method of social and mental liberation: from his perspective, Buddhism is not a religion but the observation of nature. Taking Thich Nhat Hanh and Bernard Glassman Roshi as examples, the author points out how Buddhist thinking faces social and political challenges and the potential for creativity and capacity to change which this involves. 'After all, to create is to bring into being something new, something that did not before exist. That is, to create requires one to have that beginner's mind, the mind that does not know, to spend time in not knowing with an alert, awake mind.'

The situation of Buddhists at universities in the U.S.A. is the subject of the article by Charles S. Prebish presenting the outcome of more than thirty years of field research in an environment where he is at home. The circumstances described for his target group, for whom he has coined the term 'scholar practitioners', are typical for the U.S.A. and, at the same time, generally revealing from a religio-sociological perspective. In Buddhism's countries of origin, its followers are led by an elite of monks, whereas in the U.S.A. Buddhists are mostly lay people. Within this lay movement, Buddhist texts and philosophy find themselves in contrast to a development which the author calls 'Buddhism's contextual relationship with culture'.[32] Prebish asks

[32] Editors' note: Here, a structural parallel to the development of Christian churches in the U.S.A. can be discovered. There is another

whether Buddhists within academia in the U.S.A. or other Western countries might take over the leadership role played by monks in Asia: 'In the absence of the traditional "scholar monks" so prevalent in Asia, it may well be that the "scholar practitioners" of today's American Buddhism will fulfil the role of "quasi-monastics," or at least treasure-troves of Buddhist literacy and information, functioning as guides through whom one's understanding of the Dharma may be sharpened.' Given that academics who followed the Buddha's teaching were formerly ridiculed but nowadays find increasing acceptance and appreciation as well as the courage to openly admit to Buddhism, it will certainly be interesting to pursue this question further in the future.

Money, the catalyst of global trade or the lubricant of the market economy on which we rely in our everyday life, has the nature of an illusion devoid of any substance: this pioneering thesis is posed by Karl-Heinz Brodbeck. He substantiates this argument by applying the instrument of Madhyamaka logic according to Nāgārjuna to the object of 'money': 'If Buddhist analysis is factually veridical, [...] we ought to see this work out in practice.' As a first step, ignorance, hatred and greed which, according to Buddhist tradition, are the three basic mental poisons, are examined against the background of this theme and, as a further step, the principles of Madhyamaka logic are elucidated and contrasted with 'economic explanations of money'. When Madhyamaka logic is applied to these presuppositions it follows that the nature of money is illusory as it lacks any substance of its own. Thus, the attribution of value to money is not based on any such substance, but on a vicious circle. Consistently with this, the author proceeds from the discovery

parallel to the situation in Sri Lanka around 100 C.E. when Buddhism divided into the 'vocation of books' and the 'vocation of meditation' (see contribution by Prebish).

of a concrete form of the mental poison of ignorance to 'the monetary form of the three poisons' and describes the severe economic, ecological and, most of all, social problems and 'the suffering of the many' as consequences with a global impact on mankind. A positive outlook is offered by making detailed reference to 'Engaged Buddhism' and the challenges it has to face in present times. A thread running throughout the article is the suggested replacement of ignorance on which, according to Brodbeck, economic activities are based, by non-violence and, most of all, by compassion and the awareness of the interdependence of all phenomena as the foundation for economic action.

Errors within modern economics are also Silja Graupe's concern, but these are discussed from a perspective that criticizes the static way of thinking inherent within the Western approach to this subject. To this end, she refers to the Kyōto School where philosophy of substance and substance metaphysics are rejected and the view of the world and man as unchanging entities is criticized because of the lack of freedom of thought and action so entailed: the thinker is excluded from his own thinking and thus cannot call himself into question or change himself. Zen offers a completely different approach through which the individual regains his or her freedom of innovative thought and action. Graupe applies these two different approaches to economic relations. In modern economics, the valuation of all phenomena, even of humans by themselves, is made from a perspective of utility and rationality with the objective of totally controlling all aspects of life according to these categories; thus, regarding everything from an economic angle is internalized to such a degree that it is beyond the reach of conscious decision-making. It thus follows that it is impossible to consciously derive change and emancipation from the utility principle: 'We perceive the economy as a second nature,

existing in and for itself, completely independent of our ways of knowing it.' By way of contrast, the advantages of Zen as a transforming power are highlighted: 'Moving us beyond the boundaries of a given system of knowledge, it opens up further horizons of possibilities so that gradually new ways of knowing begin to be identified and defined.'

The aspect of rationality within Buddhism is emphasised by Guang Xing with his statement that Early Buddhism is indeed rational as it is based on the Buddha's own experience and not on revelations or the teacher's omniscience. This is illustrated by numerous references to sources such as the Pāli Nikāyas and the Chinese Āgamas. The rational methods of Buddhism are opposed to popular irrational assumptions, for example by reference to the term 'faith' which, in Buddhism, stands for basic trust but not for blind faith; this is demonstrated by reference to the famous *Kālāma Sutta*. In contrast to popular religious assumptions, the Sutta states that the Buddha's omniscience does not refer to the physical world but, in the Buddha's own words, to the real nature of the world of experiences and of phenomena. In the same way, the author does not relate the attainment of *nibbāna* to the physical world, but to the world of experience. 'After an analysis of the seemingly mystical and metaphysical concepts in Buddhism we may come to the conclusion that Early Buddhism is rational because it places emphasis on knowing and seeing rather than belief.' However, if the author lays emphasis on the rational aspect of Early Buddhism this does not imply that Buddhism is a rationalistic system comparable, for example, to those of Leibniz or Spinoza. The editors feel free to interpret this highlighting of the rational as an encouragement that we should, in Kantian terms, think freely and dare to use our own understanding.

The subject of Anālayos' contribution is 'the importance of living in seclusion and facing fear as essential ingredients of the path to awakening' and what the Buddha had to say about this as a teacher. What is more, the article contains a first translation from the Chinese Āgamas into a Western language of a discourse which deals with this subject and is compared to its counterpart, the *Bhayabherava Sutta* from the Pāli canon. The author concerns himself with the difficulties of everyday clerical life and fear as a fundamental constant, a part of the reality humans have to face in life.

Thus, from the editors' perspective, this article is not only interesting from a subject-specific point of view as might be assumed at a first glance at the linguistic challenges it poses; those who do not know much Pāli or Chinese will also gain by reading it, as fear and solitude are subjects of general interest, for three reasons. Firstly, the situation of a monk living in the jungle may well be compared with the position of an isolated individual living in a multi-storey building in a city. It is no coincidence that 'jungle' is used as a metaphor for the social reality of the metropolis that existentially threatens the individual.[33] Secondly, fear and the overcoming of fear is a recurring motif within European philosophy (Epicurus, Montaigne, Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger and others); this article might therefore inspire consideration of the subject of fear in the context of intercultural philosophy. Last but not least, an insight is gained into current historical and critical research into Buddhism and its methodology. Freedom of research is considered to be axiomatic by ordained Buddhists and lay followers; as such, this article is also a practical example of free thinking within Buddhism.

[33] Cf., for example, Upton Sinclair's novel *Jungle*, 1906, and Bertolt Brecht's play *Im Dickicht der Städte* [In the Jungle of Cities], 1921/1927.

General Abbreviations

AN	Aṅguttara-nikāya
Be	Burmese edition
BPS	Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy
CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association
Ce	Ceylonese edition
Cv	Cullavagga (Cūḷavagga)
DĀ	Dīrgha-āgama (T 1)
Dhp	Dhammapada
DN	Dīgha-nikāya
EĀ	Ekottarika-āgama (T 125)
Ee	PTS edition
MĀ	Madhyama-āgama (T 26)
MN	Majjhima-nikāya
Mv	Mahāvagga
Ps	Papañcasādanī
PTS	Pali Text Society
SĀ	Saṃyukta-āgama (T 99)
SĀ2	'other' Saṃyukta-āgama (T 100)
Se	Siamese edition
SHT	Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden
SN	Saṃyutta-nikāya
Sn	Sutta-nipāta
T	Taishō (CBETA)
trans.	translator, translated
Ud	Udāna
Vin	Vinaya
Vism	Visuddhimagga

Part I

Buddhist Approaches in Eastern and Western Societies

‘Women in Between’: Bhikkhunī Ordination Debates, ‘bare life’, and the Mae Chi in Thailand

Barbara Kameniar

Abstract

The *mae chi* represent a peculiarly Thai response to what it means to be a Buddhist woman in Thai society. They fall outside of the traditional Buddhist categories of ordained or lay persons and are excluded by both Religious and State law. In effect, they are ‘women in between’ (Lindberg Falk 2007) who have been refused, and who have refused, assimilation and submission to a biopolitical state and the official *saṅgha*. This chapter is an examination of how debates around women’s ordination in Buddhism, the low status of women in Thailand and Thai *mae chi* can illuminate other possibilities for personhood and collective lives. It is the aim in this chapter to illustrate how the ambiguous position of the *mae chi* opens up what it means to walk and live ‘in between’. Like the figure of the refugee, the *mae chi* provide an example of how it might be possible to sever the connection between personhood and a territorializing nation-state to provide a space in which protean notions of ‘self’ and ‘community’ might be negotiated.

Introduction

Feminist Buddhist scholar Rita Gross has argued that ‘the *dharma* [Pāli: *dhamma*] is neither male nor female’ and that ‘[w]ithout exception, Buddhist teachings and teachers are insistent and consistent that at the ultimate level, gender is irrelevant’ (Gross 2008, 294). Through careful reference to the notion of an ‘ultimate level’ Gross articulates a form of transcendental and originary ‘presence’ (Derrida 1976) that acts as an organising principle for her appeal to an idealised and ‘pure’

Buddhism – one that is devoid of the impurities of categories of social difference such as race, class and gender. This form of argumentation is common amongst Buddhist scholars writing about the position of women within Buddhism. The inference is that if only the male *saṅgha* would return to the intentions of the historical Buddha it would come to understand the insubstantiality of all categories of social difference and liberation would follow. However, this call to return to an imaginary and idealised intentionality of the Buddha is problematic on a number of levels. The most obvious problem is the impossibility of ever grasping an essential and originary purpose, will or intention. Another is the problem of not re-examining the material and spiritual practices of the present in ways that may open up new ways of re-imagining the Buddhist *saṅgha* in more socially just and 'enlightened' ways.

This chapter takes up the case of the Thai *mae chi* and examines how debates around women's ordination in Buddhism, the low status of women in Thailand and Thai *mae chi* can illuminate other possibilities for personhood and collective lives. It is the aim in this chapter to illustrate how the ambiguous position of the *mae chi* opens up what it means to walk and live 'in between'.

I will commence this discussion by providing a description of the entry of women into the Buddhist order or *saṅgha* as this provides a foundational motif for many current practices and debates regarding women's role in the *saṅgha*. I will then proceed to outline who the *mae chi* are before discussing interviews with a small number of *mae chi* in which they comment on contemporary debates surrounding the ordination of women within Buddhism. These interviews were carried out 18 years apart and in two different regions in Thailand. They highlight the general reluctance of the *mae chi* both then and now, to be assimilated into existing regimes of power. The discussion will then move to an outline of Giorgio Agamben's notion of *homo*

sacer and, following Hannah Arendt, his framing of 'the refugee' as a 'central figure' (Agamben 2000, 22) who, along with the *mae chi*, may help us re-imagine a 'paradigm of a new historical consciousness' (Agamben 2000, 14).

Entry of Women into the Order[1]

Some five years after the Buddha's first sermon in the Deer Park at Isipatana and the establishment of the male Buddhist order, a deputation led by his aunt and foster mother, Mahāpajāpatī the Gotamī, approached the Buddha and asked him for admission into the *saṅgha*. Three times Mahāpajāpatī is said to have asked the Buddha and three times he replied 'no'. Mahāpajāpatī is said to have been saddened by the refusal and to have gone away weeping.

However, the story tells us that the Buddha's refusal did not satisfy her so she 'cut off her hair, and put on orange robes, and set out, with a number of women of the Sakya clan, towards Vesālī' where the Buddha had gone (Cv X, 1, 2). Mahāpajāpatī is remembered as a woman of determination who must have believed in her heart that the Buddha would eventually allow the entry of women into the order.

According to the Cullavagga,

> … Mahāpajāpatī the Gotamī, with swollen feet and covered with dust, sad and sorrowful, weeping and in tears, took her stand outside under the entrance porch. (Cv X, 1, 2)

There she was seen by the Buddha's friend and disciple, the kind and gentle Ānanda who is said to have been shocked by the way she looked. After all, Mahāpajāpatī and many of the women who were following her were members of the rich and powerful Sakya clan and their dishevelled appearance would

[1] I give the most popular version here.

have been quite disturbing to those who knew them otherwise. Ānanda asked Mahāpajāpatī why she looked this way and she explained her requests to the Buddha and his subsequent refusals. Ānanda is said to have taken it upon himself to plead the women's case. He approached the Buddha three times and asked him 'if women were to have permission granted to them' to enter the homeless state (Cv X, 1, 3). Once again the Buddha replied in the negative each time the request was made. The Cullavagga then tells us that Ānanda was still not satisfied with the response and resolved to ask the Buddha 'on another ground'. He asked if women were capable of 'realizing the fruit of conversion, or the second Path, or of the third Path, or of Arahantship?' (Cv X, 1, 3). That is, were women capable of living the saintly life. The Buddha agreed that they were capable. Winning this point Ānanda then reminded him that his aunt had cared for him when his mother had died and acted as his wetnurse.

Ānanda's plea (firstly to reason and then to emotion and memory) was effective and the Buddha is said to have finally agreed to allow women to enter the *saṅgha*. He did so, however, on the condition that Mahāpajāpatī accepted for herself the *aṭṭha garudhammā*, the Eight Chief Rules for *bhikkhunīs* or nuns, that effectively subordinated the *bhikkhunīs* to the male *bhikkhus*. Ānanda took these rules to her and the Cullavagga records Mahāpajāpatī accepting them joyfully.

After Mahāpajāpatī's acceptance of the *aṭṭha garudhammā*, which also marked her *upasampadā* or full initiation, Ānanda returned to the Buddha to report this to him. Upon hearing what had transpired, the Buddha is said to have launched into a discourse on the effects of women's entry into the *saṅgha*. This is perhaps one of the most damaging pronouncements recorded on women's entry into the *saṅgha*. In short it says that had women not received permission to join the *saṅgha* the 'pure religion' and the 'good law' would have lasted for a thousand

years but because they were allowed to enter it would now last for only five hundred years. However, in foreseeing the danger the Buddha laid down Eight Chief Rules for the *bhikkhunīs*.

Cornelia Church (1975) and others have noted the ambivalence evident in first allowing women to enter the *saṅgha* because they are 'capable' of arahantship, and then stating that the *saṅgha's* lifespan will be halved because of women's entry. Numerous scholars and Buddhist teachers have queried what it is the text is actually stating. While there remains debate about whether the 'hand of some ancient misogynist editor(s)' (Church 1975, 54) might have been at work in the text or whether the Buddha meant what he appears to be meaning about the impending doom to the *saṅgha* because of women's entry into it, the fact remains that this story has resonated throughout history and across different cultures to structure the lives of Buddhist women in general and Buddhist renunciant women in particular.

The story of Mahāpajāpatī and the eight rules provides a powerful backdrop to contemporary gender relations and gendered practices in Buddhism. It is a story with which the *mae chi* and laity I interviewed 18 years ago were familiar and it is almost always the first story *mae chi* and the laity tell me today when asked about the position of women in Thai Buddhism. It is also a story that haunts all contemporary debates surrounding the ordination of women in Buddhism. The story simultaneously signals a place for women within the Buddhist *saṅgha* and the danger, impropriety, and additional burden, of that place.

The eight chief rules accepted by Mahāpajāpatī, as descriptors of those burdens, circumscribed gender relations within the *saṅgha* and did so on terms that subordinated even the most senior *bhikkhunī* to the most junior *bhikkhu.* In doing so the rules broke with the established 'monastic norm of gerontocracy and conform[ed] instead to the social norm of female

inferiority' (Leslie 1983, 95). Evidence of this can be found in the seventh and eighth rules that effectively silence the *bhikkhunīs* when it comes to speaking against the *bhikkhus* even though the eighth rule provides for the official admonition of *bhikkhunīs* by *bhikkhus*.

However, it has not been the rules requiring subordination of the *bhikkhunīs* that have caused the most consternation in recent times, but rather the sixth rule of the *aṭṭha garudhammā* that requires a *bhikkhunī*, as novice, who has been trained for two years to seek *upasampadā*, or full initiation from both the *bhikkhu-saṅgha* and the *bhikkhunī-saṅgha*. This differs from ordination of *bhikkhus* where the requirement is that ordination be performed only by a group of *bhikkhus*.

According to Buddhist history, the Buddha instituted four groups that make up the collective *saṅgha* or community of Buddhists – the *bhikkhus* (ordained monks), the *bhikkhunīs* (ordained nuns), the *upāsikās* (devote laywomen) and the *upāsakas* (devote laymen). Each of these groups is said to have flourished as Buddhism spread across India and beyond, into most of Asia. Of particular interest to this paper is the movement of *bhikkhunīs* from India into Sri Lanka, a Theravādin country where the *bhikkhunīs* are said to have died out around the twelfth century CE (Gombrich 1988, 168). It is this form of Buddhism that is practised in Thailand and the Thai manifestation of Theravāda Buddhism that gave rise to the *mae chi*.

Who are the *mae chi*?

The *mae chi* are Thai Buddhist women renunciants who wear white, shave their heads and eyebrows as do the *bhikkhus* or ordained monks in Thailand. They generally keep eight precepts as opposed to the 227 kept by the monks, the 311 kept by Theravādin *bhikkhunīs,* and the five, eight or ten kept by devout laypeople. Precise numbers of *mae chi* are not known

because no centralised or official records are kept outside of a register at the Thai Nun's Institute at Wat Bowonniwet Vihara in Bangkok. Current numbers are estimated to be around 12 000.

The *mae chi* live in or around some *wat* where they perform a variety of roles related to the upkeep of the monks including cooking and cleaning. In some *wat* with progressive abbots and large numbers of *mae chi* they might also be found assisting in the teaching of meditation practices to the laity and providing support in basic *dhamma* [Sanskrit: *dharma*] teaching. Increasingly *mae chi* can also be found in independent 'nunneries' or *samnak chi* where they undertake domestic duties, grow crops, practice meditation and undertake studies in the *dhamma*. There are also a small number of high profile *mae chi* such as Mae Chii Sansanee who, because of their personal wealth, live independent lives in relative luxury, undertake acts of charity, engage in teaching and provide social commentary. In recent times a number of *mae chi* have completed higher degrees and I know of at least two who lecture at each of the Buddhist Universities in Bangkok – one having a Masters degree in Pāli and the other a PhD in Buddhist philosophy.

The *mae chi* are not ordained and therefore cannot be considered to be *bhikkhunīs* or Buddhist nuns. In spite of this they are often referred to as Thai 'nuns'. Becoming a *mae chi* is a peculiarly Thai response to what it means to be a Buddhist woman given that the official *saṅgha* position on *bhikkhunīs* is that they have never existed in Thailand, cannot be found in Theravāda Buddhism (having died out many centuries ago), and will never exist in Thailand because of the rule that a *bhikkhunī* needs to be ordained by both *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*. This position persists in spite of a community of *bhikkhunīs* in Sri Lanka in 1998, another Theravāda country, where a number of

dasasilmattawas[2] sought ordination from a group of *bhikkhunīs* whose lineage could be traced back to a Sri Lankan mission centuries earlier.

The position of the *mae chi* has varyingly been described as 'ambiguous' (Cook 1981), 'marginalised' (Lindberg Falk 2007, 254) and 'underprivileged' (Lindberg Falk 2007, 251). They have often been represented, in colonial and patriarchal terms as always and everywhere poor, uneducated and submissive. In 1982 Penny Van Esterik stated that the '*mae chi* may be viewed as failures, outcasts, or eccentrics' (Van Esterik 1982, 74).

The *mae chi* have been represented as women for whom life as a *mae chi* is their last resort (Keyes 1984). Indeed they have been described as women who have quit life because life, first, quit them. Representations of this kind tend to construct the *mae chi* as somewhat pathetic women who lack agency and who are unable to comprehend their position (Kabilsingh 1991). Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, the first Thai woman to be ordained as a *bhikkhunī* in Sri Lanka in 2001 said that prior to ordination 'she did not consider *mae chi*s to be "the right soil" because they were scared' (Lindberg Falk 2007, 241). At the *International Congress on Buddhist Women's Role in the Sangha Bhikshuni Vinaya and Ordination Lineages* in Hamburg in July 2007 a number of speakers spoke about the plight of the *mae chi* in Thailand. In a number of papers the *mae chi* were represented as always and everywhere victims of Thai patriarchy, and as women without voice waiting on the liberation that the re-establishment of the *bhikkhunī-saṅgha* would bring them.[3] While this rendering of the *mae chi* as afraid and powerless has been pervasive, it has not been absolute.

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[2] Also known as *dasa-silmātā*, *das-sil mā̆niyō*, meaning literally: 'the mother(s) keeping the ten precepts'.

[3] For information about developments after the congress see: http://www.congress-on-buddhist-women.org.

The *mae chi* have also been *translated* by a number of writers, that is, their actions have been understood as a form of communication and construed on terms defined by them through their actions (Maggio 2007, 421). When scholars have done this the *mae chi* tend to be written about as active and knowing agents who have chosen this particular path for spiritual, social and educational reasons. They also tend to be described as women for whom life as a *mae chi* is an active choice made amongst a range of alternatives (Cook 1981; Muecke 2004). This is not to say that the social and material conditions of many *mae chi* are not poor. In their own terms, they have issues. However, it is to suggest that the experiences of the *mae chi* have often been used instrumentally by others in ways that produce them as subalterns who cannot speak (Spivak 1992) when they might just as easily be understood as subjects who cannot 'be heard' (Maggio 2007). One of the things many of the *mae chi* have been saying for a number of years is that they do not perceive themselves as always and everywhere victims and that for many of them *bhikkhunī* ordination is not a concern.

Bhikkhunī Ordination

In a microethnographic study undertaken during December 1990 and January 1991 at a *wat* outside of Hua Hin I interviewed fourteen *mae chi* and two *chi phraam* about a range of issues affecting their lives including their ideas about *bhikkhunī* ordination (Kameniar 1993).[4] While such a small number of *mae chi* cannot be seen as representative, their views and ideas can be understood as illustrative of those present amongst other groups of *mae chi*. Certainly other studies have found similar views expressed (see for example Lindberg Falk 2000, 2007). In

[4] Other than a *mae chi*, a *chi phraam* (cf. *ji brahmin*) is a woman who takes the vows to ordain for a short time only, for example for a meditation retreat, and does not shave her head.

the earlier study I found there was a marked difference between the *mae chi* regarding *bhikkhunī* ordination. All but one of the *mae chi* were familiar with the story from the Cullavagga that outlined the introduction of the *bhikkhunī-saṅgha* at the time of the Buddha. They were also familiar with the stories about the 'dying out' of the *bhikkhunī-saṅgha*. Most of the women saw the establishment of a *bhikkhunī-saṅgha* in Thailand as impossible and therefore ruled out discussion of it. What was also evident was that most of the women indicated they had no interest in *bhikkhunī* ordination for themselves even if it did become available. One *mae chi* said she did not want to lose the religious autonomy that being a *mae chi* gave her and she feared the imposition of a *bhikkhunī-saṅgha* would take away her capacity to pursue her own spiritual interests. One of the mixed blessings of the low status of the *mae chi* has been that they are often left to pursue a religious path as they see fit, thus providing opportunity for 'novel religious autonomy' (Lindberg Falk, 2000, 56). The *wat* where the earlier research was undertaken had loosely defined internal structures governing daily life and many of the women had elected to reside there because of this. A number of the *mae chi* feared outside interference and the imposition of rigid rules. During the interviews some of the *mae chi* also stated that they saw the pursuit of *bhikkhunī* ordination to be the desire of an educated urban elite with little connection to their lives and raised concerns about what might happen to their status (which was already low) if full *bhikkhunī* ordination was permitted.

In April 2007 I interviewed 16 *mae chi* at five different *wat* in and around Ayutthya (Kameniar 2007). All of the *mae chi* were familiar with the historical debates surrounding the introduction of the *bhikkhunī-saṅgha* and many of the contemporary debates surrounding its reintroduction in various Buddhist countries including Sri Lanka. All but three of them expressed a belief that although the *bhikkhunī-saṅgha* may have a place in

other Buddhist countries it did not have a place in Thailand. Thailand had never had a *bhikkhunī-saṅgha* and it would be against Thai custom to introduce one now. However, all but two of the *mae chi* expressed great interest in the contemporary debates and said they were familiar with the Venerable Dhammananda[5] and her fight for *bhikkhunī* ordination in Thailand. Some said they had met her in person, others said they had heard her in the media but all said they found her a very impressive and inspiring woman. However, they then went on to say that she was highly educated and it was this that had led her down the path to ordination. Most Thai women are not like her, they said (see also Tomalin 2006, 393). The majority of *mae chi* also referred to her as a Thai Mahāyāna *bhikkhunī* whose choices were outside their tradition – 'Thai people are Theravāda, she is Mahāyāna'. According to Shizuka (2004) this problem also arose for the Sri Lankan *bhikkhunīs*. Three of the *mae chi* said they would be interested in pursuing *bhikkhunī* ordination if it became available in the Thai tradition. One of these *mae chi* said it is only right that Thai women have full ordination rights available to them because many *mae chi* know the *dhamma* and have more advanced practice than many of the monks. However, regardless of how they live their material and spiritual lives, the *mae chi* remain in the borderlands between what it means to be a lay Buddhist and one who is ordained.

Women in Between

The *mae chi* have an ambiguous religious and legal status within Thailand, and State policies relevant to them, when they do exist, are inconsistent (Muecke 2004, 225). For example, the Interior Ministry bars them from voting because they are cat-

[5] Chatsumarn Kabilsingh's name after ordination.

egorised as clerics for that purpose. But other State agencies legally regard them as lay women.
Monica Lindberg Falk describes their situation well:

> The government gives support to the monks with free education, free medical care, and free or reduced fares for buses and trains. Nuns do not receive such support from the government because of their official status as laity. However, the same government denies mae chis the right to vote in public elections, citing their ascetic status and renunciation of worldly matters. (Lindberg Falk 2000, 42)

Ideas for a number of different Bills that relate to the legal and religious status of the *mae chi* have been proposed over the last twelve years. The late Mae Chii Khunying Kanitha lobbied for 'a Mae Chii's Bill, which would give them legal status and entitle them to financial assistance from the government' (Lindberg Falk 2007, 228). However, this Bill failed for a number of reasons which included resistance to change amongst members of the official *saṅgha* and amongst some high profile *mae chi*, as well as problems in communicating the Bill to *mae chi* throughout the country (Lindberg Falk 2007, 231). The latest move to incorporate the *mae chi* into the broader *saṅgha* is the 2008 'Support and Protection for Buddhism' draft Bill wherein the *mae chi* are mentioned in only one of the 43 articles. Satisuda Ekachai, notes that that one article defines them as

> … practising Buddhist laywomen or upasika who wear white robes, shave their heads, observe eight precepts and live a homeless life. And although the draft bill will not recognise the *mae chee* [*sic!*] as monastic members, it orders mae chee to be under the clergy's control. (Ekachai 2008, without pagination)

According to Ekachai, there has been considerable opposition to the Bill by various *mae chi* who, while acknowledging they are not *bhikkhunīs* also do not see themselves as laity or wish to

submit themselves to the authority of the *saṅgha*. That is, they wish to claim a place within the *saṅgha* on terms that are negotiated by them rather than dictated to them by the *saṅgha*. Indeed, many *mae chi* would rather retain their ambiguous position than submit in ways that erase their identity or erode their agency.

In spite of the various proposals the *mae chi* continue to function as women who are simultaneously inside and outside the *saṅgha* as well as inside and outside lay life. They remain what Monica Lindberg Falk called 'women in between' (Lindberg Falk 2000, 37). It is this between-ness, this ambiguity in religious and state law that first lead me to consider whether Agamben's reading of *homo sacer*, the state of exception and the refugee, might provide a new lens through which to interpret the position of the *mae chi* in Thai Buddhism and how they might bare witness to the position of women more broadly in Thai society. I also began to consider whether the position of the *mae chi* and their refusal to be assimilated into the existing *saṅgha* on terms that would lead to their subordination or oblivion while simultaneously not refusing or rejecting the *saṅgha* altogether, might be seen as a middle way forward for Buddhist renewal more generally. That is, rather than feel pity or rage for the *mae chi*, or continue to argue that their position is untenable, perhaps we can begin to examine their lives and their choices for what insights they provide us with for re-imagining a 'paradigm of a new historical consciousness' (Agamben 2000, 14).

Problematics of Employing a Western, Masculine Framing

Before moving into a discussion of Agamben's notion of *homo sacer* it might be prudent to take a moment to consider the ap-

propriateness of engaging the theory of a European man to an analysis of a discernable group of Thai women, particularly when his insensitivity to gender has been described as 'perplexing and limiting' (Pratt 2005, 1068) and his analysis has always been a critique of European polity. In considering the question I returned to the work of bell hooks ([*sic!*] 1994) who defended her commitment to the critical work of Paulo Freire at a time when a number of white feminist scholars had abandoned it because of Freire's refusal to engage with women as a discreet category and his incessant use of masculine pronouns. In response, bell hooks argued that white feminists who refused to engage with Freire's work on these terms were like the middle class students who walk around US campuses with bottled water in their arms when they have access to 'free', clean water out of the campus taps. She argued that black women and poor women do not have the luxury to be precious about whether language is inclusive or not, in much the same way as most of the world doesn't have the luxury of to be precious about the taste of accessible, clean and free water. If a theory helps us understand oppression and provides us with the possibility for a more just future, then, according to bell hooks, we should engage with it, albeit with considerable caution. It may also be prudent to signal the limits of Agamben's analysis that have been noted by high profile Foucauldians such as Paul Rabinow and Nicholas Rose (2006) who argue that he simplifies and reduces the complexity of the exercise of biopower in contemporary liberal societies. However, in spite of its limits, Agamben's work has assisted me in thinking through the *mae chi* as a category of women who occupy 'zones of exclusion' that provide spaces for them to re-imagine notions of 'self' and 'community' even as it limits them.

Homo Sacer and Bare Life

Agamben commences *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* by distinguishing between two terms used to express what the Greeks meant by the word 'life': *zoe*, which expresses 'the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, man, or gods), and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group' (Agamben 1998, 1). That is, not a 'simple natural life but rather a qualified life' (Agamben 1998, 1). He then discusses Foucault's theorisation of the modern nation-state as a 'state of population' that uses a series of technologies to monitor and control the nation's biological life which becomes a problem of sovereign power.

> Beyond Foucault's life (*bios*) becoming the principal object of the calculations of state power (biopower), Agamben posits 'bare life' (*zoe*) as coinciding with the political realm, as signifying the state of exception. (Lentin 2006, 464)

Bare life, which Agamben names *homo sacer* or 'sacred man', is human life reduced to matter and placed under a sovereign ban, 'excluded by and from judicial law' (Pratt 2005, 1054). *Homo sacer* is the opposite of sovereign power, standing at the point of indistinction between violence and the law (Agamben 1998, 10). For Agamben, *homo sacer* is the ideal-type of the excluded being, whose life is so devoid of value that he can be killed with impunity. However, while he might be killed, *homo sacer* cannot be used in religious sacrifice.

Agamben's theorisation of bare life is becoming increasingly useful in thinking about statelessness in the current age of population movements and Judith Butler's (2004) use of his theory to discuss the suspension of laws for certain categories of human beings by the United States after the events in September

2001 illustrates the interpretive power of the idea when examining sovereign acts of violence in the name of 'protection'. Ronit Lentin also argues that Agamben's

> theorisation of the (concentration) camp as the paradigm of modernity is instructive in thinking about the hidden *nomos* of the political sphere in which we are all still living. … In the camp the temporary state of exception becomes a permanent and normal spatial arrangement. Whoever enters the camp moves in a zone of indistinction between inside and outside, exception and rule, licit and illicit, a space in which subjective right and legal protection make no sense (Lentin 2006, 464-465).

If we return to the tradition of entry of women into the Buddhist order or *saṅgha* with which I commenced this paper and begin to examine it through the lens of 'bare life' it becomes apparent that the story does more than merely signal a place for women within the *saṅgha* and the danger, impropriety, and additional burden, of that place. The story also produces a state of exception where established laws such as those of gerontocracy are suspended. So while the *bhikkhunīs* are permitted within the *saṅgha* they are simultaneously made subordinate to it. They are at once included and excluded through what Agamben might call an 'inclusive exclusion' (Agamben 1998, 8). Once this state of exception has been made, the sovereign power of the *bhikkhus* is increased rather than diminished.

According to Pratt, 'the one who is abandoned remains in a relationship with sovereign power: included through exclusion. It is thus "impossible to say clearly whether that which has been banned is inside or outside the juridical order" (Mills 2004, 44)' (Pratt 2005, 1054). That is, it is possible to have the appearance of being included even while one is banned or abandoned. To some extent this appears to be the case with the *mae chi*. Through the maintenance of their ambiguous religious and legal position, the *mae chi* are not altogether excluded from the

saṅgha but rather they are abandoned, and abandonment is not the same as exclusion, because abandonment is a relational and active term (Agamben 1998).

The *mae chi*, *homo sacer* and the Hope of the Refugee

This is materially and spatially evident through the presence of the *mae chi* within various *wat* where their exclusion is produced through their very inclusion in the *wat* complex. Locating where the *mae chi* reside in different *wat* is not difficult when one understands the inclusive exclusion the *mae chi* live under. While *mae chi* reside in *wat* their residences are usually located in the least public and least desirable part of it. The block where the majority of the *mae chi* lived at the *wat*, which was the site of my research in 1990/1991, was separated from the *wat* proper by what could only be described as a garbage dump. It was the area into which all the *wat's* refuse was thrown and then burned. The dump served as a barrier, marking a boundary that separated the central part of the *wat* and the area where the *bhikkhus* lived, from the area in which the *mae chi* lived. While the geography of inclusive exclusion of most of the *wat* I have visited more recently have not been as stark, the *mae chi* are almost always located in places of symbolic and material abandonment. The one exception was a *wat* outside Ayutthya in which the *mae chi* played an active role in teaching meditation. However, this was also the only *wat* in which the residence of the *bhikkhus* was accessed through splendidly carved gates and their living quarters were highly elaborate. So while the geographies of inclusion and exclusion appeared different as far as the *mae chi* were concerned, they were still in operation. According to Geraldine Pratt, 'geographies do more than contain or localize bare life. Geographies are part of the process by which certain individuals and groups are reduced to bare life' (Pratt 2005, 1055). The geographies of the

wat produce the *mae chi* as *homo sacer* and abandon them through an inclusive exclusion.

The *mae chi*'s ambiguous relationship to religious and social law and the various recent attempts to find a place in law for them also signal something of their category as *homo sacer*. Monica Lindberg Falk who, to date, has provided the most comprehensive overview of the *mae chi*'s struggles for legal recognition argues that from a doctrinal perspective, it would

> be easier for the Department of Religious Affairs to legitimate the *bhikkhunis* than the *mae chiis* who have created a new category that falls outside the traditional Buddhist categories of the four groups of lay and ordained person, *bhikkhuni*, *bhikkhu*, *upasaka* and *upasika*. (Lindberg Falk 2007, 236)

For Lindberg Falk, provision of a legitimate place for the *mae chi* in the *saṅgha* would equate to the 'laicisation of Buddhism… [thereby blurring] the boundaries between the lay and the ordained realms'. This would ultimately result in the weakening of 'the *sangha's* exclusive authority' (Lindberg Falk 2007, 236).

Can the *mae chi*'s status as *homo sacer*, 'bare life' in Thai Buddhism help us re-imagine Thai Buddhist community? If one follows Geraldine Pratt's discussion of 'Vancouver's Missing Women' as a means for re-imagining political community through two limit concepts used by Agamben – that is, 'the human so degraded as to exist beyond conventional humanist ethics of respect, dignity and responsibility' and the 'one and only figure of the refugee' (Pratt 2005, 1069) – then it might be possible to do so. Pratt's discussion focuses mainly on the refugee. She notes,

> The importance of this figure is that it severs the connection between personhood and the nation-state, a link that is forged in liberal societies through the concept of the citizen and territorialisation

> of individual rights within the nation-state. The figure of the refugee who refuses assimilation is of one who refuses to submit their personhood to the territorializing biopolitical state. (Pratt 2005, 1069)

If the way forward for the *mae chi* is through the figure of the refugee who refuses assimilation then what might that figure look like? According to Agamben, Hannah Arendt, herself a refugee, turned the condition of the countryless refugee on its head. She argued that

> Refugees who have lost all rights and who, however, no longer want to be assimilated at all costs in a new national identity, but want instead to contemplate lucidly their condition, receive in exchange for assured unpopularity a priceless advantage: 'History is no longer a closed book to them and politics [full participation in the saintly life as defined by Buddhism] is no longer the privilege of the Gentiles [*bhikkhu-saṅgha*] … Refugees driven from country to country represent the vanguard of their peoples'. (Agamben 2000, 14-15)

The *mae chi*, like the refugee, represents a 'disquieting element' (Agamben 2000, 21) because she breaks the identity between masculinity and Buddhist renunciation / Buddhism asceticism / Knowledge of the *dhamma.* In doing so she brings the established order into crisis and opens it up to dare to re-imagine other ways.

In putting forward this argument I am not suggesting that the position of the *mae chi* is ideal, that they are not subordinated or that their material circumstances do not need to be improved. Rather, I am suggesting that the refusal of many of them (for it is certainly not all *mae chi*) to submit their personhood to the territorializing biopolitical Thai State and the official *saṅgha* provides a space 'for a renewal of categories' (Agamben 2000, 23) that can no longer be unquestioningly supported.

According to Pratt, 'Agamben asks us to think about political strategy in other terms because seeking inclusion as citizens does nothing to disrupt a political community based on a process of abandonment. Agamben urges the need to imagine fully political subjects outside of and beyond specifically liberal notions of citizenship' (Pratt 2005, 1069-1070). For the *mae chi* this might mean a continual struggle of resistance to draft Bills that curb their autonomy while they also work to strengthen their networks with one another to create a lose form of solidarity when advocating for rights to education, health and better living conditions.

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Cultivating Self, Transforming Society: Embodied Ethical Practice in Feminism and Zen Buddhism

Ashby Butnor

Abstract

In this paper, I argue that the cultivation of moral perception is necessary to increase our performance as moral agents. Oftentimes, our moral shortcomings are the result of prior failures to see features of particular situations as morally salient. However, moral perception involves more than simply opening our eyes. It is developed through heightened attention to our embodied and situated existence. I demonstrate this in two interrelated ways – from the inside out. First, I turn to the Zen Buddhist tradition (especially the work of Dōgen) and its emphasis on embodied meditation practice – a somatic activity wherein one's perceptual capacities are enhanced in and through the body. Second, I turn to a contemporary feminist analysis to show how embeddedness within particular social contexts affects our embodied capacities. By more carefully examining these facets of embodied, situated existence, we can enhance our perceptual capabilities and be more attentive to the suffering and oppression that exist all around us.

Introduction

The cultivation of moral perception – the ability to see, recognize, and attend to the morally salient features of the world around us – is a necessary precondition for morally appropriate action. In order to respond ethically, we must be able to perceive particular situations as containing moral features that call for our direct attention. Moral perception is that which enables

the acknowledgment of a situation as a moral one in the first place – via attention to the 'weal and woe' of others. Many failures to respond in an ethically appropriate manner are *not* the result of intentional choice and the deliberate withholding of aid. Rather, they are often the result of moral obliviousness – a lack of moral attentiveness to situations that demand an ethical response. Lawrence Blum describes the problem: '[The moral agent's] failure to act stems from his failure to see (with the appropriate salience), not from callousness about other people's discomfort. His deficiency is a situational self-absorption or attentional laziness' (Blum 1991, 704). However, moral obliviousness does not excuse one from moral responsibility.

It is important to investigate the causes of moral inattention and the disconnect between moral commitments and their implementation in our daily lives. Examples of such shortcomings include the failure to recognize the needs of an elderly man in the shop, the lost child looking for her father in the mall, or the shy student attempting to articulate his thoughts in ethics class. These are simple day-to-day examples. We can easily think of dozens more examples of moral inattention that are more complex – such as the failure to recognize sexism, racism, and heterosexism in our institutions, the failure to do anything proactive concerning the needs of those afflicted by poverty or environmental conditions, and the failure to protest and change the policies of our own government. However, the basis for moral attention to these larger problems surely rests on our ability to cultivate the skills to recognize moral need that is right in front of us.

To cultivate our ability to notice both big and small ethical problems, I believe it best to start where we are – with an investigation into our embodied situation. This begins with our own particular physical, psychological, mental, and emotional constitution and the habits of perception that frame our current capacities for moral attention. Next, comes the ability to recog-

nize other embodied beings and their unique situatedness in the world. Finally, we need to recognize the larger social, political, and cultural matrix that surrounds us and comes to shape us all in particular ways. If moral perception is something that can be heightened, this improvement must occur in the relation between moral subjects and their environments. We need to learn to see both what is around us and how we are complicit in shaping this situation. In this spirit, I examine the situations of embodied moral subjects as well as the social values that inform the development of moral perception. I am most interested in two features of moral perception: (1) how our perceptual sensitivity can be cultivated and inattentiveness overcome, and (2) how increased moral perception lends itself to some progress in social transformation.

First, to address the cultivation of moral perception, I turn to the Buddhist tradition. It may be fair to say that Buddhism has provided us the most sophisticated phenomenological inquiry into the issues of moral perception and action. Hence, a look at Buddhist practice is relevant to this study for two reasons: (1) Buddhism is especially attuned to the problem of suffering and its alleviation, and (2) one goal of Buddhist meditative practice is a heightened attention and focus on the present moment. Therefore, looking at the mechanisms of Buddhist practice will demonstrate one vehicle for the cultivation of moral perception. Second, to address the issue of social transformation, I turn to feminist theory and its analysis of oppression and, specifically, how oppression is inscribed on the body. While Buddhism highlights perceptual insight, the interpersonal dimension of practice, and the need to alleviate suffering, a more sophisticated political analysis is needed to recognize more complex forms of oppression.

However, in both the cultivation of moral perception and its directedness toward social and political forms of oppression, I examine the role of the body and bodily practices. Through

attention to embodiment (physical, emotional, psychological, social, and political), we can open the door to both self-cultivation and social transformation.

Buddhist Practice: Expanding Moral Perception

To highlight the cultivation of moral perception, I focus specifically on Zen Buddhism and the teachings and writings of Japanese philosopher Dōgen (1200-1253). Dōgen emphasizes the role of the body in *zazen* (seated meditation) as well as the interpersonal nature of such practice. By looking to the teachings of Dōgen, we can see how Zen Buddhist practice emphasizes corporeal awareness and promotes perceptual expansion and clarity. However, in order to do this, a commonly held misconception regarding the purpose of Buddhist practice must be reconsidered. Specifically, I explore two interpretations of Buddhist enlightenment: enlightenment as an *epistemological* shift in our perceptive awareness (or simply, as *seeing*) and enlightenment as an engaged activity (or *doing*). I argue that the latter, understanding enlightenment (including enlightened perception and action) as a fully embodied activity, is a more nuanced and robust way to understand the dynamic relationship between selves and worlds.

The central metaphor of Buddhist enlightenment that I will challenge here is one of seeing – e.g., 'seeing into one's own nature', 'seeing one's original face', and 'seeing the suchness of things'. The employment of visual terminology to describe Zen enlightenment experience is pervasive in contemporary Buddhist literature.[1] Here, the metaphor of sight or perception is commonly used to communicate understanding, either intuitive

[1] For some examples, see Heinrich Dumoulin's *Zen Enlightenment: Origins and Meaning* (1979), Robert Carter's *Encounter with Enlightenment: A Study of Japanese Ethics* (2001), and Hakuun Yasutani's *Flowers Fall: A Commentary on Dōgen's* Genjōkōan (1996).

or experiential, or an awakening to a once hidden truth. That is, to see the 'presence of things as they are' represents an epistemological breakthrough – i.e., the bridge from ordinary, *samsaric* delusion to enlightened perception or knowledge. In Dumoulin's words:

> The knowledge of the universal unity and identity of reality derives from enlightenment. It is perhaps best explained as a *seeing* … When one sees mountains and rivers or whatever exists, he sees Buddha-nature. And when one sees Buddha-nature he *sees everything, every 'this' in its concrete existence.* (Dumoulin 1979, 107, emphasis added)

As a result, subjectivity is eliminated, the mind becomes transparent, the self emptied, and the world is allowed to present itself in its own 'pristine condition' without conceptual overlay or subjective intervention. Hence, self-centered, everyday awareness of the world gives way to the awareness of things as they truly are. This experience is akin to pure objectivity. This epistemological breakthrough is the supposed basis from which enlightened moral perception and action will arise.

This interpretation of enlightenment entails a distinction between appearances and ultimate reality and between delusion and enlightenment. However, this interpretation cannot hold within a metaphysics of dependent origination and impermanence. Dōgen, for example, rejects the possibility of such dualities as well as the belief that the 'truth' is hidden and must be uncovered. The following is from *Zazenshin*:

> [The essential activity of all the Buddhas and the active essence of all the ancestors] illumines without facing objects. This 'illumination' means neither illumining the outer world nor illumining the inner world; 'without facing objects' is, as such, 'illumination.' Illumination is not transformed into objects, because the objects are the illumination. 'Without facing' means: 'Nothing in the whole world is ever concealed,' or 'Nothing issues forth when you uncover the

world.' Its meaning is subtle and mysterious, at once interrelated and not interrelated. (Kim 2007, 14)

For Dōgen, nothing is ever concealed or hidden and then revealed when one becomes enlightened. Rather, there is an intimate connection that has always existed between the 'outer world' and the 'inner world.' Hee-Jin Kim writes extensively on the theme of intimacy (*mitsu, shimmitsu*) in Dōgen's writings. According to Kim, so-called opposites never exist as metaphysical dualities for Dōgen. Rather, they should be seen as 'orientational and perspectival foci within the structure and dynamics of realization (*genjō*)' (Kim 2007, 4). These foci are always provisional and temporal and are without fixed boundaries. Therefore, they do not become erased when they encounter their 'opposite', but must exist co-extensively.

While a shift from delusion to pure seeing may appear necessary for accurate moral perception via the elimination of ignorance and delusion, the basis of this model is untenable within Buddhist metaphysics. Enlightenment as 'radiant light' does not destroy delusion in order to awaken us to the hidden truth of all things. Rather, enlightenment and delusion are forever intimately connected and revealing of one another. The idea of moral perception, or 'seeing', must then be clarified to recognize this dynamic sense of interdependence – between selves and worlds, delusion and enlightenment, and mind and body. Therefore, enlightenment (or enlightening activity) should be thought of as a whole-body event – a transformation of our embodiment (including our perceptual capabilities and actions) in and through the world. The second model, thinking about enlightenment as a kind of engaged *practice*, offers an interpretation of enlightenment that demonstrates how mind, body, and world constitute one another. Hence, enhanced perception happens not only at the cognitive level, but also, and very significantly, at the somatic level. Perception, especially of

others and their weal and woe, is experienced with the whole body.

The activity metaphor highlights enlightenment as a form of practice and stresses the practitioner's active participation in enacting the Way. Dōgen emphasizes the actualization of Buddhist practice rather than the ultimate disclosure of reality in a single *satori* experience. By comparison, the seeing metaphor of enlightenment appears static and stale. For Dōgen, active exertion in each and every moment is a requirement of enlightened existence. Practice and enlightenment are co-constitutive. Dōgen identifies practice most typically with seated meditation (*zazen*), though other activities may qualify. Zazen is considered a whole-body event in which attachments to self and views are relinquished and body and mind come into harmony with one another. 'Seeing' is no longer prescribed by one's dispositions to perceive in narrow ways. On the contrary, by harmonizing body-and-mind, the capacity to experience one's environment is distributed throughout the body.

The role of the body in Dōgen's Zen should not be underestimated. As Kim explains, 'Dōgen claimed that we search with the body, practice with the body, attain enlightenment with the body, and understand with the body. This was epitomized in his statement 'The Way is surely attained with the body'' (Kim 2004, 101). In *Shinjin Gakudō*, Dōgen writes, 'To study the way with the body means to study the way with your own body. It is the study of the way using this lump of red flesh' (Tanahashi 1985, 91). But why is this 'lump of red flesh' so important? In *Zazengi*, Dōgen goes to great lengths to detail the proper positioning of the body in *zazen* practice – from the proper half lotus and full lotus positions, the correct place for the cushion 'only under the buttocks', the location of the right and left hands, the right and left thumbs 'lightly touching at the navel', leaning not to the left nor to the right, robes loose but orderly, ears in line with shoulders, nose in line with navel, lips

and teeth closed, eyes open 'neither too wide nor too narrow', sitting erect and breathing fully (Tanahashi 2004, 7-8). Finally, Dōgen reminds us to 'think not-thinking' through nonthinking. Note the order in which these instructions are given: the body, then the breath, and then the mind. To lose sight of the significant role of the body in the practice of 'just sitting' meditation is to lose sight of Dōgen's philosophy.

In the following passage from the *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki*, Dōgen places primary importance on the role of the body in practice:

> Dōgen also said:
> Do you attain the way with the mind or the body?
>
> Those in the house of the scriptural schools say, 'You attain the way with the body, because body and mind are one.' But they are not clear about how the body directly attains the way. Now in our house [of Zen practice], body and mind together attain the way. As long as you try to figure out buddha-dharma with mind, you can never attain it even for myriad eons or thousands of lifetimes. It is attained by letting go of the mind and abandoning views and interpretations. *To see form and clarify the mind, to hear sound and come to realization is attainment of the way with the body.*
>
> Thus, when you practice just sitting and continuously give up all thoughts and views, the way becomes more and more intimate. *So, attaining the way means attaining it completely with the whole body.* With this awareness you should sit wholeheartedly. (Tanahashi 2004, 10, emphasis added)

Here, we are reminded both of the importance of the body and the intimate connection of mind and body, or 'the whole body.' When enlightenment is conceived of as 'seeing things as they really are' it may be easy to forget that Buddhist practice is an embodied practice. 'Just sitting' is a practice that must be accomplished in and through the body.

Given that the body plays a primary role in the practice of just sitting, it is necessary to discuss what in fact is happening to

the body during meditation. More specifically, we must examine the somatic transformation of seated meditation that lends itself to a thoroughgoing reorientation with the world. Shigenori Nagatomo, in *Attunement Through the Body*, perhaps gives the most comprehensive account of the phenomenology of just sitting. To summarize Nagatomo's findings, the transformed somatic modality of the self occurs through these three interrelated processes: (1) the breakdown of desire and self-centeredness, (2) an increase in our perceptive capabilities, and (3) an increase in our 'intimacy' with our environment – experienced as a 'felt inter-resonance' (Nagatomo 1992).

This perceptual revolution is significant because the limits of individual boundaries are cast off. This sensory expansion – a seeing, hearing, and feeling with the eyes, ears, and entire body – coupled with the overturning of negative affectivity greatly increases our ability to perceive myriad dharmas (or phenomena, the 'ten thousand things') and thus enhances our objectivity – our ability to see situations clearly. The emptying of a narrow subject-centered frame of reference in addition to this new power of acuity results in a more pure and unadulterated form of intimate seeing *and* feeling. That is, moral perception is not limited to an epistemological shift. Rather, through a bodily reorientation and transformation achieved through meditation, perception is recognized as a fully active, embodied practice. In Buddhism, knowledge production is bound to the interconnectedness of perception, cognition, and action. The integration of the eyes (representing affectivity, insight, and wisdom) and the hands (representing action, mobility, and participation) in enlightened performance is what allows for the attunement to situation and to right action. Attunement to one's situation entails heightened ability to sense, to literally feel, the suffering of others as well as the motivation to ethically respond.

Nagatomo's sense of 'felt inter-resonance' as a shared somatic experience resembles the emotional bond described by Arne

Johan Vetlesen in *Perception, Empathy, and Judgment*. Vetlesen argues that moral perception relies upon a sensitivity to others by means of a basic emotional resonance. While cognitive faculties play a role in moral perception, it is this basic emotional participation – via empathy – that establishes an interest and a concern for others' well being. Vetlesen argues that, 'to "see" suffering as *suffering* is already to have established an *emotional bond* between myself and the person I "see" suffering' (Vetlesen 1994, 159). Here, the ability to view situations as *moral* situations (involving the weal and woe of others) does not involve a distanced, or objective, stance toward the world. Rather, the moral subject may be understood as playing an active, participatory role in constituting the world around her. The ability to feel and express this simple emotional connection is a reflection of the maturity, or cultivation, of the moral self – including basic emotional responses. To lack this development, and therefore to fail to perceive properly, is a moral failing on the part of the subject.

The moral subject originally constitutes the moral object, according to Vetlesen. Vetlesen is looking 'from the subject to the object, inquiring how the subject is active in disclosing the object' and, therefore, 'we are referred, as it were, from the object back to the subject arriving – or failing to arrive – at it' (Vetlesen 1994, 158-162). While the main issue of discussion is how the object comes to affect the subject in such a way as to move him to attention, the onus is not on the object itself. Rather, the subject must be disposed to *receptivity*:

> [M]oral perception has its source in human receptivity, in the primordial capacity of human beings to be attentive to, to be alert to. It is thanks to this underlying active receptivity, this sensuous-cognitive-emotional openness to the world, that moral perception is provided with a direction, is 'tuned in' to deal with specific features of specific situations. (Vetlesen 1994, 162).

Here, Vetlesen stresses the cognitive-emotional *activity* of the moral subject. This investigation of moral perception then is not so much concerned with the realities of the world as given and fixed, but rather the moral constitution of the subject – insofar as features of the subject are operative in disclosing the world in a particular way.

The receptivity that Vetlesen claims is the source of moral perception is what is cultivated through Buddhist practice. By focusing on embodied practice, not only can Buddhist practitioners de-emphasize their particular views and attachment to ideas that may limit moral perception, but they can work on developing the abilities of the body to resonate, or become receptive to, other embodied subjects as well. This demonstrates the ability of Buddhist practice to break down our self-centered perceptions and work to cultivate a felt attentiveness to the experiences of others, what Vetlesen likens to empathy. Given the Buddhist ideal to alleviate the suffering of all beings, this increased perceptual sensitivity allows for a greater attunement and attentiveness to the embodied situation of others.

Feminist Analysis: The Social Context of Moral Perception

It is important to recognize that moral perception is not simply a process between the moral subject and the moral object – even if this process involves a complex relationship of interaction. Rather, social context and influence play a role in delineating how we see the world and how we participate in its making. Vetlesen describes this influence as follows:

> Hence, individuals are not free to pick just any moral objects they would like. Perception does not start from scratch; it is guided, channeled, given a specific horizon, direction, and target by society. Society, not the single individual, selects the appropriate objects of

> moral concern and the like, other objects it rules out, conceals from view, demanding that the individual do so as well. (Vetlesen 1994, 194)

Social values affect our moral perception. We may not recognize certain forms of suffering as suffering if we have been trained to be inattentive to their existence. Aside from considering obvious forms of negative social influence on our moral perception (such as outright disregard for certain groups, as in racism or anti-Semitism), I want to focus on how oppressive social contexts become inscribed upon the body and our bodily practices. Harmful social practices become marked on our bodies – in the way we look, the way we act, and the way we interact with others. Not only does this affect some groups' ability to cultivate their own embodied practices in healthy directions, but it also affects our ability to perceive this kind of suffering if we lack a more robust political analysis and understanding.

Looking at social contexts, especially oppressive social contexts, adds a new dimension to moral perception and its cultivation that I find absent in the Buddhist tradition. In some sense, a broader examination of the way in which society, or culture, plays itself out on different kinds of bodies is lacking. For example, inter-resonance occurs at a very basic level – our bodily existence. The other's body is a body like mine – similarly structured, commonly experiencing the world, and, at this level, interchangeable in its corporeality. This conception of the unifying experience of a shared bodily experience is not meant to erase difference, but to posit a core similarity underlying differences. This shared embodiment provides the basis for communication – including communication across difference. Because of our shared embodiment, we have something that connects us and makes dialogue possible. We need not necessarily rely on the intellect, or language, or reason. There is a felt inter-resonance by virtue of living within these human bodies. While

realizing the depth of shared human embodiment in a thoroughgoing way is necessary, it is important to recognize the variety of social influences that come to affect bodies in particular ways. Without an understanding of these differences, moral perception may be stunted.

I believe that thinking about moral perception at the level of basic embodiment will only get us so far and may not enable us to skillfully perceive or respond to *all* situations. In Zen, we see discussion of the most basic human actions – e.g., sitting, walking, and eating rice. Attunement to our embodiment in these situations does open the door to a better understanding of all our interdependent, perception-guided activities and does give us a basis through which to relate to other embodied persons. However, situations that involve complex forms of suffering and oppression may require more than immediate seeing or feeling in their diagnosis and response. In addition to our basic corporeal connection, there is also a significant social and cultural context that frames our embodied practices. The world itself is ambiguous – i.e., open to various interpretations. However, these interpretations take on definitive shape and meaning within a cultural context with its own particular norms and expectations. In Drew Leder's words:

> Ultimately, the very notion of a pure phenomenological vector somehow independent of its cultural manifestations is but an abstraction. The body's practices and self-interpretations are always already shaped by culture. Conversely, culture is always shaped out of the stuff of bodies. (Leder 1990, 151).

We are always already in a situation, in a world of meaning that is beyond our making. Understanding how social and cultural matrixes are incorporated into our embodied activities is necessary to heighten our moral perception.

We literally in-corporate social values into our flesh and inscribe cultural practices onto our bodies. This applies not only

to the embodied skills that we develop, but also in how we incorporate the practices of those around us – such as gestures, mannerisms, and gaits. As Joan Mason-Grant explains, 'The lived body is, from the start of life, in an intimate dynamic with corporeal others' (Mason-Grant 2004, 97). Inter-corporeality is a basic condition of human existence, as is our development of social know-how within, between, and among our various social groups. This inter-subjective incorporation applies to freely chosen groups (such as clubs, cliques, or political or religious associations) and also to unchosen sociopolitical groups – such as those based on gender, race, class, ability, sexuality, and so on. When we are around others, we simply incorporate, or graft, them onto our own bodies. This explains the picking up of an accent when staying in a different country, the annoying habits children pick up in preschool, and the silly gestures or facial expressions we adopt from colleagues in the next cubicle or office. These social 'performances' are often tacit and do not often appear as objects of reflection. However, after a lifetime of cues, our bodies carry some record of our associations. These group or association-based embodied practices are part of our social know-how.

Social practices and values become inscribed upon the flesh through our repetitive, and often unreflective, enactment of particular habits. It is necessary to make a critical turn toward our embodiment of what may seem to be harmless, yet habitual, daily activities. Mason-Grant provides questions for such an analysis:

> How do the practices in which we participate normalize us as social actors in ways that operate below the level of consciousness? How do practices come to inhabit our very understanding of who we are and what we can do? How are our practices implicated in larger social structures? (Mason-Grant 2004, 97).

Our daily activities are infused with social meanings. Such critical reflection on what we take to be 'natural' things to do or given parts of a daily routine is a daunting task. The performativity of gender norms provides ready examples of such incorporation. Feminine gendered practices range from manners of movement and posture (demure and constricted behavior), the disciplinary practices of daily beauty regimens (shaving, cosmetics, etc.), continuous dieting (sometimes taking the form of eating disorders) to more extreme forms of body modification (such as plastic surgery and Botox injections).[2] Because we have incorporated these habits and sedimented them into our very bodily subjectivity, we become heavily invested in them and, in turn, in the social norms and expectations that give them meaning. These incorporated practices (in addition to many others) can be examined to reveal the tacit embodiment of values that run counter to our moral and political commitments.

The problem with social know-how is that the cultural standard for the appropriate expression of a given practice or identity is infused with power. As such, social norms and expectations will (a) exclude or marginalize individuals who cannot properly perform their assigned roles well, and (b) work to further cement oppressive and subordinating practices into our very bodily subjectivity. The cause of exclusion and marginalization is the naturalization of a particular subset of accepted behaviors and practices. Those who perform the accepted behaviors well are socially comfortable and at ease with their embodied subjectivities and social know-how. In Mason-Grant's words, 'Privilege enables persons to live their lives as socially unproblematic – as morally neutral, normal, average, unremarkable – and to experience their agency as a "natural" attribute

[2] Two excellent resources on the incorporation of gendered practices include: *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader* edited by Donn Welton (1998) and *Gender in the Mirror: Cultural Imagery & Women's Agency* by Diana Tietjens Meyers (2002).

rather than produced' (Mason-Grant 2004, 112). The lives of those who fail to live up to the social norms and expectations or never even come close to mastering the necessary social skills are much more difficult. This inferior self is ill at ease, uncomfortable in its own skin, continuously self-conscious, and self-deprecating. The one benefit, as meager as it may sound, is the capacity of such an excluded or marginalized person to critically examine the practices that contribute to his or her own subordination. The problematization of one's social dis-ease (*sic!*) can awaken 'a politicized consciousness of what otherwise remains tacit, namely, unjust structures that produce personal and social know-how' (Mason-Grant 2004, 112). With the critical insight and epistemic privilege that comes from marginalized positions, feminist theorists find promise in reforming the practices that produce oppression and, thereby, healing the subordinated subjectivities that result from them.[3]

Attentiveness to these influences allows for a greater perception of harm and suffering created and sustained by our institutional systems. It is my argument here that the cultivation of embodied, enlightened perception in the world is a necessary, though not sufficient, step on the path to both personal and social transformation. In addition to increasing our embodied perception and connectedness, a keen political analysis (via feminism, critical race theory, class analysis, and so on) is needed to perceive suffering – specifically as it is manifested in different forms of oppression. However, this analysis need not take place only at the level of social structures, institutions, and policies. The effects of both privilege and oppression can be seen and felt as inscribed upon the body – both physically and

[3] Also see Diana Meyers on the role of 'outlaw emotions' for acquiring insightful and revealing perspectives on oppressive social systems. *Being Yourself: Essays on Identity, Action, and Social Life*. 2004. See Chapter 7: 'Emotion and Heterodox Moral Perceptions: An Essay in Moral Social Psychology.'

manifested in our incorporated norms and practices. So, again, attention to embodied practice can open the door to increased moral perception and the betterment of our capacities as moral agents.

It is my claim that moral inattention is the cause of many of our ethical failures. In *Moral Mindfulness*, Peggy DesAutels investigates the causes of moral inattentiveness. DesAutels identifies both psychological factors and social influences as explanatory tools to understand moral failure.[4] As DesAutels argues, we are best able to overcome these moral failures by making transparent those habits of perception and action that often obscure different moral perspectives. By attuning ourselves to our own moral psychology (as highlighted in the Buddhist tradition) and the social context in which our choices are framed (as emphasized in feminist discourse), we will be more capable of refining our moral attention, and, consequently, our moral responsiveness. DesAutels' argument supports a radical revision of our embodied situation in the world: 'moral attentiveness requires *active* structuring of our social environments, habits, and practices in ways that facilitate seeing and responding to the moral features to which we are committed' (DesAutels 2004, 72). Thus, moral perception requires a three-fold process to aid in the development of our own moral personhood and the communities in which we live: (1) a thoroughgoing process of self-examination, including our embodied practices, habits, values and commitments, (2) a recognition of the resonance of shared embodiment and the cultivation of empathy therein, and

[4] DesAutels identifies mindless routines, goal-directed foci, contextual cues, conceptual rigidity, and emotional filters as a few of the contributing psychological factors to moral oblivion. She also identifies three ways that moral responsiveness is affected by the situation and the social influence of others: 'inhibition of bystander intervention', situational ambiguity and a reliance on others' interpretation and action, and social pressure to conform. See DesAutels, Moral Mindfulness, 73-78.

(3) a keen insight into the ways that oppression and injustice are inscribed upon variously positioned social bodies. It is through this process of accentuating our way of seeing the world that suffering – in all its forms – can be addressed most effectively.

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The Buddha and the Engaged Buddhists on Free Thinking: It's Not What You Think

Sallie B. King

Abstract

Buddhism contains an important thread of teaching and practice supportive of free thinking. Teachings encouraging free thinking are examined in the work of the Buddha as well as some contemporary Engaged Buddhists, namely, Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, Thich Nhat Hanh and Roshi Bernie Glassman. A distinctive Buddhist understanding of free thinking is examined.

Introduction

The topic of the present volume, 'Buddhism as a stronghold of free thinking?' simultaneously points to the reputation which Buddhism enjoys as a stronghold of free thinking and raises a question as to whether that reputation is deserved. Of course, like any major religion that has been in existence for two and a half millennia and spread around the world, one can find among Buddhist teachers a wide spectrum of expressed teachings and practices on virtually any important religious subject. There is, however, in Buddhism an important thread of teachings and practices relevant to free thinking that is quite distinctive of its approach, rooted in the teachings of the Buddha and very much alive in the teaching and practice of contemporary socially and politically activist 'Engaged Buddhists'. It is this thread encouraging of free thinking that the present essay will examine.

Free Thinking in the Buddha's Teaching

To begin with the teachings of the Buddha that are encouraging of free thinking we may consider the famous advice that he gave to a people called the Kālāmas. When the Buddha came upon the village of the Kālāmas, they related to him that they had previously been visited by other wandering religious teachers and that each of them had, in turn, explained their own doctrines and then disparaged the teachings of the others. The Kālāmas told the Buddha that they were quite perplexed about whom they should believe! The Buddha's reply was this: 'It is fitting for you to be perplexed, O Kālāmas, it is fitting for you to be in doubt. Doubt has arisen in you about a perplexing matter. Come, Kālāmas. Do not go by oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by a collection of texts, by logic, by inferential reasoning, by reasoned cogitation, by the acceptance of a view after pondering it, by the seeming competence of a speaker, or because you think, "The ascetic is our teacher." But when you know for yourselves, "These things are unwholesome; these things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise; these things, if undertaken and practiced, lead to harm and suffering,' then you should abandon them."' Similarly, he said, they should engage in those practices that lead to welfare and happiness (Bodhi 2005, 89 = AN 3.65 [Thai: 3.66], PTS III 189).

One may wonder about some of the advice given here. If this quotation is supposed to show Buddhist encouragement of free thinking, wouldn't it be more appropriate for reason to be recommended? Why not rely upon logic and reason? The Buddha evidently was concerned that not everyone is very good at using reason, not to mention trained in the use of more formal reasoning skills. One can make mistakes, one can be misled by what seems to be true. This would be particularly the case in those who have little familiarity with the workings of their own

minds. Clearly, though, the Buddha is encouraging his hearers to decide for themselves what to do and not to do, on the basis of their own unmistakable life experience, without depending in any way upon the authority of a speaker, one's relationship with the speaker, or upon the authority of a text or oral tradition. In the end, the only thing upon which one can really rely is one's own direct experience of suffering and freedom from suffering. That is what one knows with certainty.

Another teaching from the Buddha that it is important to mention here is the Simile of the Raft. In this simile, the Buddha says that the Dharma, his teaching, is like a raft that one uses to cross over a body of water to reach the other shore. When one reaches the other shore one shouldn't carry the raft around with one but put it down and go on one's way. The Buddha concludes, 'the Dhamma [Pāli spelling of *Dharma*] is similar to a raft, being for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of grasping' (Ñāṇamoli / Bodhi 1995, 228 = MN 22, PTS I 135).

The important thing to note here is that the raft, the teaching of the Buddha, is a tool used to achieve a goal; the raft is not the goal. The goal is to 'cross over' from 'this shore', samsara (Sanskrit / Pāli: *saṃsāra*), to the 'other shore', nirvana (Sanskrit: *nirvāṇa*, Pāli: *nibbāna*), or experiential knowledge of Truth. Thus, the Buddha himself declares that his teachings do not contain the Truth; they are a tool to be actively used by seekers of Truth in order to gain their own direct, experiential knowledge of Truth. The teachings are highly valuable, certainly, and should be actively used, but they are not for grasping or holding on to. Ultimately, when one gains experiential knowledge, the teachings are to be left behind.

This understanding that Truth is experiential and not verbal or propositional is one of the keys to Buddhist encouragement of free thinking. There is no direct correspondence between any verbal formulation and ultimate Truth in Buddhism. Therefore, one cannot in Buddhism make belief in a proposition the key to

attaining what Buddhism as a religion promises: ultimate liberation. It simply does not work that way. In this thread of Buddhism, liberation is experiential knowledge of Truth, which one realizes oneself through one's own efforts, albeit with the Buddha pointing out the way to that realization, i.e., by way of the form of practice that he recommends. One also cannot force another to practice, or to practice well. These are matters that are in one's own hands.

Furthermore, the experience of realization is like the experience of viewing a beautiful sky: one can neither adequately express the content of such experience nor fully understand what another says about such experience if one lacks the experience oneself – that is, one cannot describe a beautiful sky to a blind person and even the Buddha refused to say much about nirvana. The Buddha famously used negative language in speaking about nirvana, even in his most effusive moments, calling it the 'unborn, ungrown and uncreated'. This refusal to describe nirvana or to encapsulate it in words leaves the mind open, in a state of unknowing as to what nirvana is. This may be contrasted with the treatment to which the concept of God has been subjected in Europe. The ancient prohibition on making images of God served many purposes, one of which was to prevent the mind from thinking that it knows in some relatively concrete way what the nature of God is, for example, what God 'looks' like. With the advent of icons, however, this prohibition began to break down, and with the painting of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, we came to have God portrayed as an old man in the sky. Most adults realize that God, if such a being exists, is not an old man in the sky. However, that image, reinforced as it is by our use of the pronoun 'He' for God, is very difficult to shake from one's mind! One doesn't really think God is an old man in the sky, but that image will not leave one's mind, becoming an active barrier to realization of the true nature of God, if such a being exists. Now Buddhism does not have God; the point here is simply to make clear the way in

which the Buddha's refusal to talk about nirvana, a refusal that has held in the Buddhist tradition, encourages an open mind, a state of unknowing, with respect to the ultimate goal of Buddhism. This state of unknowing is spiritually necessary. Whatever nirvana is, it has almost nothing in common with samsara, the realm of ordinary experience. Anything that we thought we knew about nirvana would be an expression of samsaric experience and thoughts; such ideas could not lead us towards nirvana. An open mind, a state of unknowing, is essential.

The Buddha outlined the basic components of Buddhist practice in his teachings on the Noble Eightfold Path. These eight kinds of practice fall into three categories of training, namely, the cultivations of wisdom, morality and mental discipline. Free thinking can be found in all three of these forms of practice.

Let us begin with the cultivation of wisdom. The Buddha taught that the development of Right Understanding, a component of wisdom, consists in two factors, one external and one internal. He said, 'For bhikkhus [monks], those in the process of learning.... I see no other external factor more beneficial than having a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇamitta* [a teacher]). […] For bhikkhus, those in the process of learning ... I see no other internal factor more beneficial than critical reflection (*yonisomanasikāra*)' (Payutto 1995, 223-224). Having a spiritual friend means having a teacher, to whom one should listen. The great contemporary scholar-monk Phra Payutto explains critical reflection as, 'Engaging the mind, considering matters thoroughly in an orderly and logical manner through the application of critical or systematic reflection' (Payutto 1995, 223).

Having a teacher and using critical reflection are to a certain extent interdependent; that is, one must use critical reflection in deciding upon a teacher and one must allow the teacher to correct some of one's own erroneous thoughts. However, listening to a teacher is considered to be a large part of the practice only for beginners, who lack sufficient knowledge and insight to rely upon

their own understanding; the beginner needs guidance from others. The practitioner must learn to stand upon his or her own two feet and should progressively move more and more to greater reliance upon his or her own critical reflection. As Payutto puts it, 'Most people with undeveloped wisdom must still depend on the suggestions and encouragement of others and gradually follow these people until they achieve their own intelligence. But eventually these undeveloped people must practice until they are able to think correctly for themselves and can then proceed to the final goal on their own' (Payutto 1995, 223-224). One can see here why the Buddha did not simply recommend reason to the Kālāmas.

Turning to the Buddha's teaching on morality, we may conveniently examine this teaching as it is found in the five lay precepts, which are perhaps the most basic moral teachings of the Buddha. These state that one undertakes to observe the precepts (1) not to kill; (2) not to steal; (3) not to engage in sexual misconduct; (4) not to lie; (5) not to ingest intoxicants. A moral code saying that one should not do certain things may seem to be an unlikely place to look for elements of free thinking; however, when one understands the nature of the precepts – what kind of thing a moral precept is in Buddhism, how it functions – then how it is that the precepts promote free thinking will become clear.

First, note that the precepts are something that one undertakes to observe. They are not commandments from a higher being – there is no God in Buddhism, and the Buddha does not issue commandments. The Buddha is a teacher and a spiritual guide; he is not in any position to give commandments. In fact, the Buddhist precepts rest upon a natural law foundation. The Buddha points out what is the case, what is true about the world, and advises people that given what is true about the world, certain behaviors will be unskillful and will cause suffering for oneself and others, while other behaviors will be skillful, will not produce such suffer-

ing and can serve as a foundation for freeing oneself from the entire realm of such suffering, samsara. For example, if I were to kill or steal, that would, of course, cause direct suffering to another, but due to the law of karma it would also cause suffering for me. The natural law of karma is a law of cause and effect; the consequences of a person's actions bear fruit in the form of something that happens to that person, either immediately, later in this life, or in a future life. An act of violence plants a karmic 'seed' that will bear 'fruit' in the form of some violence that strikes that person in the future, whether in this life or in a future life; stealing will result in one's being in want. These are laws of nature which the Buddha knows and teaches others. He points out that it is skillful to act in such a way that one will not suffer in the future; it is up to others to choose whether they will act upon that guidance and advice. Thus there is no external compulsion involved in observing precepts, just the sharing of information and an act of choice. The five lay precepts, then, are self-chosen principles of training.

In addition, the precepts are fundamentally developmental. They function as external guides only for those in the very earliest stage of moral development, those who need someone else to tell them these things, who have not yet seen for themselves the necessity of protecting themselves by exercising this kind of restraint. The second most elementary stage of development is found in those persons who have understood for themselves the link between their actions and the consequences that follow from their actions but who are so self-centered that the only motivation guiding their behavior is the effort to gain pleasure and avoid pain. More advanced than them are those who are motivated by the intention to avoid causing pain not only to themselves but also to others. There is, then, a continuum of attitudes and motivations involved in working with the precepts that is based upon the development of each individual's moral insight. This continuum also can be seen in the fact that each precept conceived in the

negative is paired with a moral ideal stated in positive language. Thus the precept not to kill is paired with the ideal of *mettā*, or loving-kindness. Not to kill a human being is the moral minimum requirement, presented as an external rule for people who need that kind of support, but the ethical challenge embodied in the precept and its positive counterpart is open-ended. One progresses from not killing a human being to not killing other living beings, to not causing other forms of harm to living beings, to occasionally helping others, to continually nurturing others' well-being, to saintly universal benevolence. The moral possibilities grow with the moral and spiritual development of the person.

Thus morality in Buddhism is based in self-discipline, but it is a self-discipline that is chosen. Ultimately what begins as a constraining self-discipline develops into an open-ended process of growth towards an ideal. That ideal has a certain shape – it is benevolent, nonviolent, compassionate – and is embodied in the paradigm example of the Buddha, but each person discovers for himself or herself the particular way in which he or she will live out that ideal. Thus free thinking in the context of Buddhist morality is by no means absolute – there are limits, a minimum standard below which one should not fall. There is a moral continuum in which it is clear that more self-centered behavior is less skillful and less desirable than more selfless behavior. However, morality is fundamentally not a matter of rule-following. It is a matter of self-development towards a set of virtues held as an ideal. In this way there is a certain freedom and openness about Buddhist morality of which we will see more later.

The third category of Buddhist practice is mental discipline-and-development, inclusive of meditation. In the teachings of the Buddha, the most important kind of meditation is called 'mindfulness' (*sati*). Like morality, mindfulness meditation involves a certain amount of discipline and a certain amount of freedom and openness. It is a discipline to learn to focus the mind, to concentrate on the present moment and on a certain field of awareness.

However, the hallmark of mindfulness practice is its nonjudgmental quality. In mindfulness practice, the first step is to be aware of what is, in the present moment in the field of awareness. Simply to be aware of the contents of the present moment (i.e., without the mind running off somewhere else, such as to a memory) is the first step. The second step is to accept it – if there is a painful sensation, to accept that there is pain, not to recoil from it but to calmly be with it, accepting that it is there; if there is a pleasant sensation, not to cling to it, but to be aware of it as it comes and accepting without resistance its going when it fades. The third step is to investigate it, to become as fully aware as possible of all its details and nuances. Throughout this process, the trainee is cultivating a nonjudgmental state of mind – accepting whatever is as it is, not fighting it, denying it, clinging to it, exaggerating it, minimizing it – or if one is fighting, denying, clinging, exaggerating, or minimizing, being aware that one is doing *that* and accepting that *that* is going on. This training in nonjudgmental awareness yields a kind of free thinking that may be different from the kind usually imagined. With mindfulness training, one becomes a person who, when thinking a particular thought, knows that they are thinking that thought, nonjudgmentally accepts that they are thinking that thought, is aware of any emotions or physical sensations that arise when thinking that thought, is aware of the gestation and passing away of that thought, lets the thought come, lets the thought go, and is not captured or carried away by the thought – that is, the thought is not in control of the mind. In this there is not only free thinking – think whatever you think, no one is judging you, not even you yourself – but also freedom (in the Buddhist sense of liberation) in and while thinking.

Free Thinking in the Work of Engaged Buddhists

Let us turn now to the Engaged Buddhists. Engaged Buddhism is a 20th and 21st century movement found throughout Buddhist Asia and among Western Buddhists in which Buddhists respond to social, political, economic, environmental and other practical concerns by applying traditional Buddhist values, practices and ideas in new ways. It is not a centralized movement but sprang up in different forms in the various Buddhist countries in response to the crises and needs present in those countries. It has no particular relation to any Buddhist sect(s); Buddhists of any sect may be Engaged Buddhists. The best known example of Engaged Buddhism is the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Liberation Movement, which struggles nonviolently for Tibetan self-determination. Other examples include: Thich Nhat Hanh and the Vietnamese 'Struggle Movement', which attempted to use nonviolent means to end the war in Vietnam; Aung San Suu Kyi and the Burmese monks who dared to march in the streets of Burma and call for democracy and human rights; A.T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya Shramadana, a large development and peacemaking movement in Sri Lanka; the 'ecology monks' of Thailand who try to simultaneously help impoverished Thai farmers and protect the seriously ailing Thai ecosystem; Venerable Mahā Ghosānanda of Cambodia, who led peace walks in an effort to heal the wounds of that country; Venerable Cheng Yen and the Tzu Chi movement of Taiwan, providing free medical care and disaster relief; Zen Master Bernie Glassman of New Jersey, pioneering self-help employment and housing for the homeless in the heart of the capitalist world; and laywoman Joanna Macy, creating 'despair and empowerment' workshops to help people overwhelmed by the dangers that our planet is facing. These are just a few examples of a large movement in which millions of people – monks, nuns and laypersons – are involved. Obviously, all of these leaders and movements do not think and act in exactly the same way; the

problems they address and the conditions of life in which they exist differ dramatically. However, they share a basic orientation, way of thinking and set of values.

What do Engaged Buddhists have to tell us about free thinking in Buddhism? Even a tradition like Buddhism that in its origins and ideals strongly emphasizes the importance of individual critical thinking is liable, as the centuries and millennia roll by, to have both teachers and disciples who are content to parrot what their forebears said, resulting in a tradition that becomes intellectually lazy and stuck in intellectual ruts. The late scholar-monk and Engaged Buddhist Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu was appalled by the ossified state of Buddhist thought in Thailand in the 20th century. He sought to breathe new life into the tradition by asking new questions, making provocative interpretations of the Buddha's teachings, and above all encouraging people to think. He wrote, 'After learning meditation and gaining a workable mastery over the mind, one should tread the path of developing insight. That is to say, one has to maintain the freedom of mind by not harboring attachment or clinging to any sectarian view or philosophy. To attain Buddhadhamma [the Truth of which the Buddha spoke] demands utter openness and purity of heart. Nonattachment to sectarian views implies nonattachment to individuals as well. Even if the person for whom you have attachment is an arahant, or perfected one, it is false, since you cannot recognize an arahant until you yourself become perfected. ... Rather than seeking to emulate one whom you take to be perfected, you would do far better to develop insight into the real nature of arahant-ship. ... We should not even think that the Buddha can help us or can lead the way, because he says that we must search for the Truth by ourselves. When we know that the Buddha is the embodiment of the light that lightens our way, then we ourselves, embodying that light, become the Buddha – enlightened ones' (Buddhadāsa 1989, 66).

Many of the Engaged Buddhists, including Buddhadāsa, are important reformers of the Buddhist tradition, as is evidenced in this quotation. Here Buddhadāsa picks up the thread of the Buddha's teaching that says that Right Understanding is based upon learning from a teacher and developing one's own critical reasoning. Clearly feeling that people are overdoing the former and not doing enough of the latter, Buddhadāsa attempts to goad people into realizing the uselessness of practicing a kind of Buddhism by rote. He makes it clear that a spirit of inquiry, not of learning what one is told, is at the heart of Buddhist practice. In the spirit of the Buddha's advice to the Kālāmas, he warns people against attachment to sectarian views (what the Buddha spoke of as oral tradition, lineage of tradition, the thought that 'this man is my teacher'). To simply accept a teaching because it comes, for example, from a senior monk represents the death of Buddhism, as far as Buddhadāsa is concerned. One cannot just passively receive wisdom; wisdom is an active achievement. It is a personal realization that opens in one's own heart/mind on the basis of one's own sincere and unrelenting practice of inquiry and investigation. For Buddhadāsa, intellectual laziness and passivity, as well as the misguided loyalty to one's teachers that causes one to simply accept whatever they say are anathema to the Buddhist path.

In fact, Buddhadāsa himself was quite a rebel against the Buddhist status quo in Thailand, refusing to submit his mind to the form of education then mandated by the Buddhist leadership, turning his back on the ladder of success within the Buddhist hierarchy and educating himself by directly reading the Buddha's words as preserved in the Pāli canon (instead of studying them indirectly through commentaries as mandated by the educational system), while living in isolation from the Buddhist community. Buddhadāsa made many important contributions to Buddhism in 20th century Thailand and beyond, but among them, many people feel that the most important was his work to awaken Buddhists

from their intellectual slumbers and to provoke them with his relentless challenges into a new readiness for inquiry. Buddhadāsa is, in fact, the Buddhist free thinker *par excellence*.

It is useful at this point to introduce a caveat about free thinking from a Buddhist point of view and Buddhadāsa is the one to do it for us. He writes, 'Liberal democracy ... upholds the ideal of freedom. ... But the freedom it upholds is so ambiguous that it seems always to be controlled by the power of human defilements (kilesa). ... The liberal philosophy or ideology of freedom does not have the power to resist the strength of human defilements. The ambiguity of the meaning of liberal democracy promotes the idea that anything one wants to do is all right. The thug as well as the wise man claims freedom for himself. ... We must accept the fact that we all have defilements' (Buddhadāsa 1989, 184-185).

It is striking that these remarks questioning the value of freedom as understood in Western liberal democracies come from Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, whose name is synonymous in Thailand with liberal thinking and who was in his own life a magnificent practitioner of free thinking. While his focus in this quotation is on political freedom, his thoughts on freedom as such apply in a significant way to free thinking as well. Buddhadāsa's concern about freedom is based in his view of human nature, a view that he shares with other Buddhists. In that view, human beings have two sets of qualities. On the one hand, we have good qualities that make us want to seek truth and enlightenment. On the other hand, our hearts and minds are infected to one degree or another with 'defilements', the most basic list of which is greed (or grasping), hatred (or aversion) and delusion. His concern about liberalism and the unqualified societal embracing of freedom is that people can and will use such freedom in ways that either promote greed, selfishness, conflict, suffering, etc. or in ways that promote ending suffering, overcoming conflict, and taking care of ourselves, our communities and our planet. Persons with minds dominated by the defilements are in the first category; persons

with minds relatively free of the defilements are in the second category. It is critical to realize that from a Buddhist perspective those whose minds are in the thrall of the defilements *think* that they are free, but they are not free. They are the very opposite of free; they are puppets dancing to the whim of the puppetmaster. The puppetmaster is the defilements; they are the ones who are pulling on the puppets' strings. From this Buddhist perspective, thinking or acting over and over on the basis of the ego and its wants is not freedom; it is compulsion. Thinking always of how I can maximize my pleasure without worrying about others, thinking always of my rights and never of my responsibilities – these are not examples of free thinking; they are examples of thinking driven by the defilements. Buddhism is all about freedom, but it is not this kind of freedom. Free thinking, as we have seen, is essential in the living of a life lived towards the realization of freedom, but it is not this kind of thinking. So free thinking is essential but we need further investigation in order to become clearer as to what free thinking is, as understood from a Buddhist perspective.

A second Engaged Buddhist who has strongly promoted a spirit of inquiry and free thinking is Thich Nhat Hanh. During the war in Vietnam, Thich Nhat Hanh formed a new Buddhist practice community made up of both monastics and laypeople called the Tiep Hien (loosely translated as 'Interbeing') Order. He composed new precepts (in addition to the already existing precepts, not instead of them) to guide order members. These precepts represent ideals that the group wanted to live up to. The first three are quite pertinent to the subject of free thinking. Let us examine them one at a time.

The first Tiep Hien precept states: 'First: Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. All systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth.' It is of course significant that the very first precept emphasizes the importance of free thinking. The rootedness

of this precept in the Simile of the Raft is readily apparent and in fact Nhat Hanh directly states that this is so. He writes, 'This precept is the roar of the lion [wisdom's self-declaration]. Its spirit is characteristic of Buddhism. It is often said that the Buddha's teaching is only a raft to help you cross the river, a finger pointing to the moon. Don't mistake the finger for the moon. The raft is not the shore. If we cling to the raft, if we cling to the finger, we miss everything' (Nhat Hanh 1987, 89). Thus Nhat Hanh reiterates the Buddha's teaching that even the teachings of the Buddha are tools to be used, not absolute truth. All teachings, all religions, all ideologies are so. Cling to nothing, he says. If we cling to Buddhist teachings, we miss the liberating potential of Buddhism itself. Like Buddhadāsa, Nhat Hanh sees free thinking and inquiry as the very heart of Buddhism.

It should be noted that Nhat Hanh wrote this precept during the war in Vietnam which he saw as fundamentally a war between ideologies. He was deeply impressed by the realization that attachment to ideologies kills: 'If you have a gun, you can shoot one, two, three, five people; but if you have an ideology and stick to it, thinking it is the absolute truth, you can kill millions' (Nhat Hanh 1987, 89).

'Second: Do not think that the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice non-attachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times' (Nhat Hanh 1987, 90). This precept has roots in mindfulness practice, finding truth in reality as it is in the present moment. It also helps us to see what is meant in a Buddhist context by free thinking or open-mindedness. Buddhist free thinking or open-mindedness refers, first, to non-attachment to views and, second, to the practice of inquiry, what Nhat Hanh calls deep looking and deep listening. Since reality is

new in every moment, whatever views one holds (on the basis of past experience) may get in the way of seeing reality as it is in the present moment. Tenacious clinging to views, on the one hand, and mindfulness – deep looking and deep listening to the present moment – on the other, are opposites. Mindfulness is to be as aware, as awake, as alert and curious, and as alive as possible to the contents of the present moment in the present moment, where life is lived, where reality is found. *That* is free thinking, as understood in Buddhism.

'Third: Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness' (Nhat Hanh 1987, 91). One can see a certain rootedness of this precept, again, in the advice given by the Buddha to the Kālāmas, as well as in the previous two Tiep Hien precepts. In his commentary, Nhat Hanh says that this precept 'is the spirit of free inquiry'. Just as one should not blindly accept the views or teachings even of revered or authoritative others, the other side of that same coin is that one should not be the kind of teacher, parent or authority figure who tries to mold disciples, students or children into people whose views reproduce one's own. What one teaches, in fact, should be open-mindedness, that is, no particular content, but a spirit of inquiry. Seeking to make others agree with 'me' is just another of the ego's many wants, a form of grasping and self-aggrandizement. Therefore, being open-minded is, in itself, both an expression of freedom from ego-domination and a practice helping to engender freedom from ego-domination. This is why free thinking, or open-mindedness, is so strongly emphasized by many great Buddhist teachers.

A final Engaged Buddhist whose work we should consider is American Zen Master Roshi Bernie Glassman. In 1994 Glassman founded the Zen Peacemaker Order as a training community for spiritual social activists. It is founded upon three principles: '(1)

not-knowing, thereby giving up fixed ideas about ourselves and the universe; (2) bearing witness to the joy and suffering of the world; and (3) loving actions towards ourselves and others' (www.zenpeacemakers.org/zpo/zpo_rule.htm).

Not-knowing, also called unknowing, is the Buddhist free thinking or open-mindedness that we have been discussing. In the prologue to his book, *Bearing Witness*, Glassman introduces the Zen Peacemaker Order and raises the question as to what peace-making is. He responds with words about not-knowing: 'You won't find the answer in this book. This is not a book of answers, for there is little energy in answers. This is a book of questions. More precisely, it's about living a questioning life, a life of un-knowing. If we're ready to live such a life, without fixed ideas or answers, then we are ready to bear witness to every situation, no matter how difficult, offensive, or painful it is. Out of that process of bearing witness the right action of making peace, of healing, arises' (Glassman 1998, xiv).

Glassman acknowledges that his principle of not-knowing is rooted in his Zen training: 'I trained for many years in Zen practice', he writes, 'which deals directly with the practice of unknowing' (Glassman 1998, 68). His words are reminiscent of the Zen master Shunryu Suzuki, whose book, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, is a modern Zen classic. The book begins with the words, 'In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few' (Suzuki 1973, 21). Suzuki also says, 'when you study Buddhism you should have a general house cleaning of your mind' (Suzuki 1973, 111). It is like cleaning out an attic in which is stored a great deal of dusty, old stuff. Everything must go so that the room can be cleaned. Once the room is clean, we may want to bring many things back in, if they prove useful, but for a time everything must go. With the mind cleared out, we may be able to see things in a fresh and alive way.

Glassman provides a good example of what he means by practicing unknowing. He tells a story from when he was a relatively

new teacher and activist and met with a group of Catholic nuns. These nuns had many years experience working with the poor and also had engaged in personal meditation practices for many years. As they sat talking together, the nuns talked about God. Glassman says, 'as I listened to them talk I shook my head, thinking to myself, 'They've been meditating for so long, and they still believe in God!''' Immediately, he says, he caught himself. 'Here I was, Bernie Glassman, and I *knew* that meditation had nothing to do with God. I was a young, relatively inexperienced Zen teacher, and already I *knew* that these nuns, who had practiced their rich vocation for so many years, were wrong to talk about God' (Glassman 1998, 69). What is particularly striking about this statement is that Glassman is not just saying that he should be more open-minded; he seems to be actively open to learning what he can from people whose meditation practice is a practice of experiencing God, that is, whose spirituality – at least in the way it is expressed – is diametrically opposed to his own. This has its risks – to do this is to consciously open one's spirituality to development in an unpredictable direction, possibly one that would require one to stop being a Buddhist. But that risk is smaller than the risk involved in staying in the mind that *knew* that the nuns were wrong to talk about God. That kind of mind puts a full stop to the spiritual life, which is based upon open-ended inquiry into the unknown, with no ability to predict or control where the inquiry will take one. *That* is Buddhist not-knowing, Buddhist free thinking.

That is why, though there is no God in Zen, one often sees Zen masters talking about God when speaking to Western audiences. For example, Shunryu Suzuki writes, 'Usually everyone forgets about zazen. Everyone forgets about God' (Suzuki 1973, 67). As part of an undergraduate educational experience, this writer once attended a weekend Zen retreat with a Japanese Zen master who assigned the entire group of students a koan to meditate on that he had invented: 'When the plane flies overhead, where is God?'

This does not mean that either of these Zen masters 'believed in God'. After his wake-up call with the Catholic nuns, Glassman began having occasional Passover seders, Sabbath celebrations and Catholic masses celebrated in his Zen center, and he has happily sent his own Zen students down the road to the local mosque to do *zikr*. That is Buddhist free thinking, Buddhist open-mindedness.

Glassman's second principle, bearing witness, is essentially mindfulness, being as fully as possible present and alert in the present moment. Not-knowing and bearing witness mutually reinforce each other because we cannot be aware and present to the present moment in the present moment if our mind is already full of what it knows. The practice of bearing witness has led Glassman to develop some innovative and challenging practices for his students. One of these is 'street retreats'. Challenged by homelessness in New York City and its New Jersey suburbs, Glassman developed a program that took students into the streets of the Bowery, where they live as the homeless do for several days. They walk the streets all day without money, panhandling, growing progressively dirtier, receiving looks of uneasiness and aversion from passers-by. At night, without a roof over their heads, they look for a way to stay warm and catch a little sleep. Glassman readily acknowledges that this practice does not yield the same experience as that of the truly homeless. Nevertheless, it plunges those who do it into not-knowing and bearing witness. Many participants say it is the most profound experience of their lives.

Thich Nhat Hanh advocates much the same thing as Glassman's combination of not-knowing and bearing witness leading to actions of peacemaking. When asked by students what they should do about one problem or another, Nhat Hanh replies that there is no blueprint. You should simply go to where there is suffering, he says, and be with that suffering; don't turn away from it. Out of that experience, he says, something will occur to you to do and you should do that thing. In this way, Glassman's third

principle – the Engaged Buddhist principle of taking some action to help, to heal, to make peace – emerges from the matrix of the first two principles, not-knowing and bearing witness.

In closing, we should note that Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Glassman Roshi all were and are tremendously creative people. Buddhadāsa inspired free thinking in an entire generation of Thai people. He founded schools, helped the public schools rethink their curriculum, supported female Buddhist monastics, engaged in dialogue with Christianity, and challenged Thai society in their political thinking. Thich Nhat Hanh has taught spiritual social activists around the world that in order to make peace, it is necessary first to 'be peace'. He has created forms of Buddhist practice for children, and led retreats (which he calls 'treats') for Vietnam veterans, psychologists, artists and families. Bernie Glassman has founded programs that have helped homeless people maintain steady employment and keep roofs over their heads and led 'bearing witness' retreats within Auschwitz with the children of Nazi guards, Holocaust survivors, children of German soldiers and children of refugees.

Where does Buddhist Free Thinking lead in Practice?

There is little doubt in my mind that this impressive creativity is deeply related to the free thinking, the open-mindedness that each one of these teachers has advocated and practiced. After all, to create is to bring into being something new, something that did not before exist. That is, to create requires one to have that beginner's mind, the mind that does not know, to spend time in not knowing with an alert, awake mind. When awake and alert with the unknown, there will be surprises; some of them may be of interest to others or have some practical use. In this way something new is created. This kind of creativity is where Buddhist free thinking, when properly done and at its best and most authentic, leads.

This is not to say that Buddhism is always free thinking and creative. Buddhist institutions, like all human institutions, experience the constant pull towards preserving the status quo, as the Thai example shows. Fortunately, there is in Buddhism a strong thread of teaching and practice based upon free thinking that is able, from time to time, to subvert this pull.

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The Silent Sangha: Scholar Practitioners in American Buddhism

Charles S. Prebish

Abstract

Today it is rather ordinary for individuals teaching Buddhist Studies in universities throughout the world to be 'scholar-practitioners', involved in the practice and training associated with various Buddhist traditions and sects. Nonetheless, it has not always been easy for these academics to reveal their religious orientation in an environment that is not uniformly supportive of such choices. Thus this paper will serve the dual purpose of describing not only the development of the academic study of Buddhism in America, but also some of the ways in which that development has affected the personal lives of those scholars who have made formal religious commitments to the Buddhist tradition.

Introduction

There can be little doubt that both the practice and study of Buddhism in the Western world have grown enormously in the last quarter-century. Fueled by a dramatic increase in ethnic Asian Buddhist communities in Western countries since 1965, and the continued expansion of various convert Buddhist communities, many million Buddhist practitioners now reside in the Western world. Although the expansion of the Western Buddhist movement is likely not surprising to observers of the modern religious landscape, the surge of scholarly interest in Buddhism in general was surely unexpected. In the years between 1900 and 1971 (when I received my Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from the University of Wisconsin), there were just under 100 Ph.D./Th.D degrees

awarded in North American colleges and universities with dissertation topics related to Buddhism. In the next quarter-century, nearly 1,000 doctoral degrees – with Buddhist-related dissertation topics – were awarded in those same institutions. In the sixty year period between 1937 and 1997, 75 dissertations and theses on American Buddhism were completed in North American Universities.[1] Moreover, at the Twelfth Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies – the flagship professional organization for the discipline of Buddhist Studies, founded in 1976 – held in Lausanne in August 1999, there were more than 200 papers presented, with the overall conference being attended by over 300 individuals. Yet, one of the most highly attended panels at that congress was devoted to the topic of 'Buddhism in the West', and recent panels on American Buddhism presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion have clearly been the most highly attended of all panels sponsored by the 'Buddhism Section'. Moreover the American Academy of Religion has recently authorized a yearly 'consultation' unit devoted to the study of Western Buddhism.

Virtually everyone who begins an academic career in Buddhist Studies eventually pours through Étienne Lamotte's exciting volume *Histoire de Bouddhisme Indien des origines à l'ère Śaka*, either in the original French or in Sara Webb-Boin's admirable English translation.[2] That Lamotte was a Catholic priest seems not to have influenced either his understanding of, or respect for, the Buddhist tradition, although he did worry a bit from time to time about the reaction of the Vatican to his work. Edward Conze, arguably one of the most colorful Buddhist scholars of this century, once remarked: 'When I last saw him, he had risen to the rank of Monseigneur and worried about how his "Histoire" had

[1] See Williams 1999a, Williams 1999b.

[2] Both the original volume and the translation were published by the Institut Orientaliste of the Université de Louvain, see Lamotte 1958 and 1988.

been received at the Vatican. "*Mon professeur*, do you think they will regard the book as *hérétique*?" They obviously did not. His religious views showed the delightful mixture of absurdity and rationality which is one of the hallmarks of a true believer' (Conze 1979, 43). Although there have been only a few scholarly studies chronicling the academic investigation of Buddhism by Western researchers, and fewer still of the academic discipline known as Buddhist Studies, until quite recently, the issue of the religious affiliation of the researcher has not been part of the mix. Almost exclusively, the founding mothers and founding fathers of Buddhist Studies in the West have had personal religious commitments entirely separate from Buddhism.

As a novice graduate student in the prestigious 'Buddhist Studies Program' at the University of Wisconsin in the Fall of 1967, the very first 'in-group' story I heard from the senior students was about the recent visit of Edward Conze, conclusively acknowledged as the world's foremost scholar of that complicated form of Mahāyāna literature known as *prajñāpāramitā.* The narrative, however, had nothing whatsoever to do with Professor Conze's great scholarly passion. Instead, it concerned a question, playfully put to the rather blunt and outspoken scholar during a seminar session: 'Dr. Conze, do *you* actually meditate?' Conze's simple reply: 'Yes.' But the student pressed on: 'Ever *get* anywhere?' The brusque response: 'First trance state.' The dialogue abruptly ceased and the issue was never broached again. Upon hearing that story as a naïve fledgling Buddhologist, I was utterly and absolutely astounded to learn that *any scholar* of Buddhism actually *did* anything Buddhist. Now, barely a quarter-century later, it is rather ordinary for individuals teaching Buddhist Studies in universities throughout the world to be 'scholar-practitioners', involved in the practice of trainings associated with various Buddhist traditions and sects. The back cover of Georges Dreyfus's new book *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and Its Tibetan Interpretations*, for example, mentions his academic

affiliation *and* the fact that he earned the monastic Geshe degree following fifteen years of study in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in India.[3] Robert A. F. Thurman, holder of the Jey Tsong Khapa Chair of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies at Columbia University, is routinely cited at the first Westerner ordained as a Buddhist monk by the Dalai Lama. Adorning the entire back page of the book-jacket of Robert Buswell's volume *The Zen Monastic Experience* is a picture of Buswell as a monk in a Korean Zen temple in 1975. Peter Gregory has been a longtime student of Taizan Maezumi Rōshi, as well as director of the Kuroda Institute, associated with the Zen Center of Los Angeles. Christopher Queen, Dean of Students in Continuing Education at Harvard University, and Lecturer in Buddhist Studies, has for many years been a practitioner of Vipassanā. And numerous other citations could be posted. Nonetheless, it has not always been easy for these academics to reveal their religious orientation in an environment that is not uniformly supportive of such choices. Thus this paper will serve the dual purpose of describing not only the *development* of the academic study of Buddhism in America, but also some of the ways in which that development has affected the personal lives of those scholars who have made formal religious commitments to the Buddhist tradition.

Current Buddhist Studies

More than fifteen years ago, I titled a review article on recent Buddhist literature 'Buddhist Studies American Style: A Shot in the Dark', explaining at the outset that the conjured image of Inspector Clouseau 'falling through banisters, walking into walls, crashing out of windows, and somehow miraculously getting the

[3] See Dreyfus 1997. It is interesting to note that Dreyfus lists his Geshe Lharampa degree (earned in 1985) on his curriculum vitae along with his M.A. (1987) and Ph.D. (1991) from the University of Virginia.

job done with the assistance of his loyal Oriental servant',[4] was not an accidental choice on my part; that Buddhist Studies in America was just as erratic as poor Clouseau.

Lately, as noted above, Buddhist Studies in America has begun to engage in the useful process of self-reflection, and the results of that inquiry are fruitful and inspiring. Following David Seyfort Ruegg's insightful 'Some Observations on the Present and Future of Buddhist Studies',[5] the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* devoted an entire issue (Winter 1995) to the topic entitled 'On Method', providing the occasion for scholars to reflect on various aspects of the discipline. One must be aware that there is a vast chasm between Buddhist Studies and other disciplinary studies in religion, such as Christian Studies. Luis Gómez notes,

> The difference between Christian and Buddhist Studies is perhaps in part explained by the fact that Buddhist Studies continues to be a Western enterprise about a non-Western cultural product, a discourse about Buddhism taking place in a non-Buddhist context for a non-Buddhist audience of super-specialists, whose intellectual work persists in isolation from the mainstream of Western literature, art, and philosophy, and occasionally even from the mainstream of contemporary Buddhist doctrinal reflection. The audience to which Christian Studies speaks shares with the Judeo-Christian tradition a more or less common language. It is possible, if not natural, for members of the audience to accept the conceit that they belong to the tradition and the tradition belongs to them ... Furthermore, whereas Christianity and Christian Studies as we know them are the fruit of a continuous interaction with Western secularism, rationalism, and the modern and post-modern Western self, most of our Buddhist materials and many of our Asian informants belong to a very different cultural tradition. The methods and expectations of our scholarship and our audiences have been shaped by a cultural history very different from that of Buddhist traditions. (Gómez 1995, 190)

[4] See Prebish 1983, 323-330.
[5] See Ruegg 1992.

The homogeneity that a 'common pattern of institutional support provides' is simply lacking in Buddhist studies, as Buddhologists invariably find their academic homes in Religious Studies departments, Area Studies Centers, language institutes, and even schools of theology, as José Cabezón straightforwardly points out.[6] Thus, when he goes on to identify Buddhist Studies as a 'hodge-podge', signalling its *heterogeneity*, this is no surprise. Nor should it be when he proclaims, 'Now that the cat is out of the bag, what will guarantee the stability and longevity of the discipline is not the *insistence on homogeneity*, which in any case can now only be achieved through force, but instead by *embracing heterogeneity*' (Cabezón 1995, 236, 240).

To this point, what has also been ostensibly lacking in the discussion is a consideration of that portion of the community of North American Buddhologists which falls into a category that is most properly labelled 'scholar-practitioner'. Of the 106 respondents to the survey whose results were reported in my recent book *Luminous Passage: The Practice and Study of Buddhism in America*, *at least* 25 percent are openly Buddhist (although religious affiliation was *not* one of the items queried). It is my best estimate that *at least* another 25 percent remain silent about their Buddhist practice, for reasons which will become apparent. In many respects, these 'silent Buddhists' are known to each other, but not to the larger community. During my early years at the Pennsylvania State University, my Buddhist Studies predecessor, Garma Chen-chi Chang, often invited me into his home for morning discussion. On these days he frequently met me in completely informal attire (and sometimes in his pajamas), and made green tea for us to share as we sat on the floor of his living room and talked for hours. Never did this discussion ever address my progress in my new position in the Religious Studies Department. Never did this discussion ever address my research progress or

[6] See Cabezón 1995, 236-238. The quoted phrase is Cabezón's as well.

predicaments. Instead, it always concerned my own Buddhist practice, and the utterly compassionate advice of an older, and wiser, longstanding practitioner. My colleague worried not at all about my professional growth, which he assumed would develop properly, but about my spiritual health in a new and challenging environment. It was a discussion we shared with each other and never with non-Buddhists. Later, I learned why. In 1972, after a short research trip to Riverside, California to work briefly with Professor Francis (Dojun) Cook, a fine scholar and a serious Zen practitioner who was contributing several chapters to my forthcoming book *Buddhism: A Modern Perspective*, and who was more at ease with his personal commitment to Buddhism than any Westerner I had ever met, I finally summoned the strength to declare to one of my Penn State colleagues that I was indeed Buddhist. His immediate response, knowing my Jewish heritage, was to say, 'Oh, now you've become *Buddhish*.' Although preceding Roder Kamenetz's fanciful use of the phrase JUBU to denote a Jewish Buddhist, this nickname wasn't a joke, wasn't intended to be amusing, and I always wondered if it colored his future estimates of my scholarship. Later, in 1977, my Religious Studies Department head summarily rejected my very first sabbatical proposal to study American Buddhism in the San Francisco Bay Area, amidst the largest concentration of scholar-practitioners, and most lively Buddhist communtity I could locate, because he claimed 'there is no such thing as American Buddhism', and that 'the notion of such a thing as scholar-practitioners in Buddhism is not only contrary to the mission of American public education, but also stupid.' When I taught my first academic course on American Buddhism in 1975, it was the only course of its kind on the North American continent. Now there are many dozens of courses on aspects of North American Buddhism, an entire sub-discipline of Buddhist Studies to examine Western forms of Buddhism, and perhaps as many as six million Buddhists in the United States. Unfortunately, my Japanese

American department head did not live long enough to see the development of what he considered a non-entity.

In an interesting article entitled 'The Ghost at the Table: On the Study of Buddhism and the Study of Religion', Malcolm David Eckel writes in his conclusion:

> It is not just students who are attracted to religious studies because they "want to know what it is to be human and humane, and intuit that religion deals with such things." There are at least a few scholars of Buddhism who feel the same way. For me the biggest unsettled question in the study of Buddhism is not whether Buddhism is religious or even whether the study of Buddhism is religious; it is whether scholars in this field can find a voice that does justice to their own religious concerns and can demonstrate to the academy why their kind of knowledge is worth having. (Eckel 1994, 1107-1108)

In a recent issue of *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, Duncan Ryūken Williams, an ordained Sōtō Zen priest and Ph.D. candidate at Harvard University, compiled a short list of institutions which offer graduate study in Buddhism. Although Williams' listing includes the expected sorts of categories ('Most Comprehensive Programs', 'Institutions with Strength in Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies', and so forth), he also includes a category called 'Practitioner-Friendly Institutions'. About these he says,

> Nevertheless, there are a number of degree programs that encourage or support Buddhist practice and scholarship among students. These "practitioner-friendly" programs generally offer one of three things: the ability to pursue a degree in the context of Buddhist priestly training, courses in the practice of Buddhism that complement academic study, or an emphasis on Buddhism from a normative point of view. (Williams 1997, 68)

And he lists them too: California Institute of Integral Studies, Graduate Theological Union, Hsi Lai University (now renamed University of the West), Institute of Buddhist Studies, and Naropa

University. He probably could have added Nyingma Institute, the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, and Sōka University as well. Williams comes right to the edge of the scholar-practitioner pond when he notes, 'At most universities, faculty members in Buddhist studies tend to be far fewer in number than their Christian or Jewish counterparts' (Williams 1997, 68), but he chooses not to jump into the issue. Cabezón and Gómez elect to take the leap, both dramatically and insightfully. In advancing his comprehensive discussion of the discipline of Buddhist Studies, Cabezón suggests:

> One of the best entries into the identification of the variant kinds of scholarship is not through their sympathetic depiction, but through their caricature in stereotypes. These stereotypes are associated with specific racial/ethnic, national, religious and gender characteristics. Like all stereotypes, they are falsehoods: racist, sexist, and generally exhibiting the type of intolerance to which we as human beings are unfortunately heir. But exist they do. (Cabezón 1995, 243)

While Cabezón lists nine specific stereotypes, each of which is interesting in its own right, it is the first of those that informs this enterprise:

> Critical distance from the object of intellectual analysis is necessary. Buddhists, by virtue of their religious commitment, lack such critical distance from Buddhism. Hence, Buddhists are *never* good buddhologists. Or, alternatively, those who take any aspect of Buddhist doctrine seriously (whether pro or con) are scientifically suspect by virtue of allowing their individual beliefs to affect their scholarship. Good scholarship is neutral as regards questions of truth. Hence, evaluative/normative scholarship falls outside the purview of Buddhist Studies. (Cabezón 1995, 243)[7]

[7] To his credit, Cabezón cites Jacques May's alternative view in "Études Bouddhiques: Domaine, Disciplines, Perspectives", *Études de Lettres* (Lausanne), Serie III. Tome 6, no. 4 (1973), p. 18.

Without undervaluing the critical goals implicit in all Buddhological scholarship, Gómez adds yet another dimension to the conversation, arguably the most critical. He says,

> Contemporary Buddhists, wherever they might be, are also an audience for our scholarship ... They can be a source (however maligned and deprived of authority they may sometimes appear) because, inevitably, they speak to us and make demands on us ... But in our field the object is also a voice that speaks to us and hears us. It is present not only as object but as a set of voices that demands something from us. In fact our "object" has had a biographic presence in all of our lives – *especially on those of us who can remember moments in our life narratives in which we have "felt Buddhists" or "have been Buddhists" or have "practiced," as the contemporary English expression has it*. I would venture more, even for those who at one time or another have seen in some fragment of Buddhist tradition a particle of inspiration or an atom of insight, Buddhism is an object that makes claims on their lives. For those who have failed even to experience this last form of interaction with the object, there must have been at least moments of minimal encounters with seeking students or, after a dry and erudite lecture, one of those emotional questions from the audience that makes all scholars nervous. (Gómez 1995, 214-215. The italics are mine.)

Of course the above places the contemporary Buddhologist squarely between the proverbial rock and hard place. If one acknowledges a personal commitment to the tradition being studied, the suspicion Cabezón cites so clearly is immediately voiced; but if one remains silent, how can the demands Gómez outlines be fairly confronted? These are issues not confronted by the American scholar of Judaism or Christianity, and they are a powerful impetus for the silence among Buddhologists alluded to in the chapter title.

Conclusions

In the years between 1972 and 1978, while I was doing fieldwork for my book *American Buddhism*, I visited more American Buddhist groups than I can now remember, and although such educational enterprises as Nyingma Institute (founded in 1973) and Naropa Institute (now Naropa University, founded in 1974) were still young and sparse on the American Buddhist landscape, there was scarcely a group I visited that didn't aggressively emphasize the relationship between, and need for, *both* study and practice. In an experiential age, with religious antinomianism of virtually all kinds rampant, this insistence on study along with practice startled me.

Stories reflecting the study/practice dichotomy are abundant in both the primary and secondary literature on the subject. Walpola Rahula's *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* provides a good summary of the issue.[8] During the first century BCE, in the midst of potential foreign invasion and a severe famine, Sri Lankan monks feared that the Buddhist *Tripiṭaka*, preserved only in oral tradition, might be lost. Thus the scriptures were committed to writing for the first time. Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the entire dilemma, a new question arose: What is the basis of the 'Teaching' (i.e., *Sāsana*), learning or practice? A clear difference of opinion resulted in the development of two groups: the Dhammakathikas, who claimed that learning was the basis of the *Sāsana*, and the Paṃsukūlikas, who argued for practice as the basis. The Dhammakathikas apparently won out, as attested to by several commentarial statements quoted by Rahula.[9]

[8] See Rahula 1966, 157-163.

[9] Rahula 1966, 158-159: "Even if there be a hundred thousand bhikkhus practicing vipassanā (meditation), there will be no realization of the Noble Path if there is no learning (doctrine, pariyatti)" (from the Commentary on the Aṅguttara Nikāya). Commentaries from the Dīgha Nikāya, Majjhima Nikāya, and Vibhaṅga echo the same sentiment.

The two vocations described above came to be known as *gantha-dhura*, or the 'vocation of books', and *vipassanā-dhura*, or the vocation of meditation, with the *former* being regarded as the superior training (because surely meditation would not be possible if the teachings were lost). Rahula points out that *gantha-dhura* originally referred *only* to the learning and teaching of the *Tripiṭaka*, but in time, came to refer also to 'languages, grammar, history, logic, medicine, and other fields of study' (Rahula 1966, 161). Moreover, not the least characteristic of these two divisions was that the *vipassanā-dhura* monks began to live in the forest, where they could best pursue their vocation undisturbed, while the *gantha-dhura* monks began to dwell in villages and towns. As such, the *gantha-dhura* monks began to play a significant role in Buddhist education. Peter Harvey, for example, notes,

> The *Sangha* has also been active in education. In the lands of Southern and Northern Buddhism, monasteries were the major, or sole, source of education until modern times. This is reflected in the fact that the most common Burmese term for a monastery, *kyaung*, means "school." (Harvey 1990, 242)

Rahula says as much, quoting R.K. Mookerji's *Ancient Indian Education*,

> The history of the Buddhist system of education is practically that of the Buddhist Order or Sangha ... The Buddhist world did not offer any educational opportunities apart from or independently of its monasteries. All education, sacred as well as secular, was in the hands of the monks. (Rahula 1966, 287)

In view of the above, it would probably not be going too far in referring to the *gantha-dhura* monks as 'scholar-monks'. It is these so-called 'scholar-monks' that would largely fulfill the role of 'settled monastic renunciant', in Reginald Ray's creative three-

tiered model for Buddhist practitioners (contrasted with the 'forest renunciant' and 'layperson').[10]

Why is this distinction so important? It is significant for at least two reasons. First, and most obviously, it reveals why the tradition of study in Buddhism, so long minimized in popular and scholarly investigations of the American Buddhist tradition, has such an impact on that same tradition, and has resulted in the rapid development of American Buddhist schools and institutes of higher learning in the latter quarter of this century. Furthermore, it explains why the American Buddhist movement has encouraged a high level of 'Buddhist literacy' among its practitioners. However, it also highlights the fact that the American Buddhist movement has been almost exclusively a *lay* movement. While many leaders of various American Buddhist groups may have had formal monastic training (irrespective of whether they continue to lead monastic lifestyles), the vast majority of their disciples have not. Thus the educational model on which American Buddhists pattern their behavior is contrary to the traditional Asian Buddhist archetype. It is, in fact, the *converse* of the traditional model. As such, at least with regard to Buddhist study and education, there is a leadership gap in the American Buddhist community, one largely not filled by an American *sangha* of 'scholar-monks'.

What has been the response to the educational leadership gap on the part of American Buddhist communities? Again, I think the explanation is twofold. On the one hand, there is a movement in some American Buddhist communities to identify those individuals *within the community itself* who are best suited, and best trained, to serve the educational needs of the community, and confer appropriate authority in these individuals in a formal way. Recently, the Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, son of Chögyam Trungpa and now head of the Shambhala International community, declared nine community members 'Acharyas', an Indian Buddhist designation for a respected teacher. These nine individ-

[10] See Ray 1994, 433-447.

uals, one of whom holds the Ph.D. degree from the University of Chicago with specialization in Buddhism, were authorized to take on enhanced teaching and leadership roles in their community and beyond. In the words of one of the nine:

> We all felt a commitment to deepen the understanding in the West of Kagyu, Nyingma, and Shambhala traditions. There was also a common feeling that we could take a lead in looking outward beyond our community to engage in creative and open-minded dialogue with other spiritual traditions, and to explore the many forms of contemporary and traditional wisdom. (Hayward 1997, 1)

While there are a few communities where monks or nuns are in residence and the traditional Asian model is maintained, such as Hsi Lai Temple, most American Buddhist communities are bound by necessity to follow the procedure utilized by Shambhala International. Unlike many Asian countries where 'Buddhist Studies finds consistent institutional support from religious circles' (Cabezón 1995, 237), American scholars are not likely to benefit from enterprises which enhance the opportunities of their Asian counterparts, such as Sōka University in Japan.[11] There is, however, another alternative, where the American Buddhological scholar-practitioner is vital in the ongoing development of the American Buddhist tradition.

Above, it was noted that in Asia the monastic renunciants were almost exclusively responsible for the religious education of the lay-*sangha*. On the other hand, virtually everyone who writes on American Buddhism sees it almost exclusively as a lay movement, devoid of a *significant* monastic component. Emma Layman, one of the earliest researchers in the field, says as much: 'In general, American Buddhists are expected to lead their lives within the lay community rather than in a monastic setting ...' (Layman 1976, 18). Later, Rick Fields echoes the same sentiment: 'Generalization

[11] See, for example, Metraux 1988, 126-128.

of any kind seems to dissolve in the face of such cultural and religious diversity. And yet it does seem safe to suggest that lay practice is the real heart and koan of American Buddhism' (Fields 1992, 371). In the absence of the traditional 'scholar-monks' so prevalent in Asia, it may well be that the 'scholar-practitioners' of today's American Buddhism will fulfill the role of 'quasi-monastics', or at least treasure-troves of Buddhist literacy and information, functioning as guides through whom one's understanding of the Dharma may be sharpened. In this way, individual practice might once again be balanced with individual study so that Buddhist study deepens one's practice, while Buddhist practice informs one's study. Obviously, such a suggestion spawns two further questions: (1) Are there sufficient scholar-practitioners currently active in American Buddhism to make such an impact? and (2) Are they actually making that impact?

With regard to the former question, much of the information reported above is necessarily anecdotal. By simply making mental notes at the various conferences attended by American Buddhologists, based on discussions of individual practice, one can develop a roster of scholar-practitioners who are openly Buddhist; and while such a roster is not publishable in a survey which guarantees anonymity, the number is quite clearly *at least* 25 percent. I first became aware of ways in which personal study and practice interpenetrated during my initial summer at Naropa Institute in 1974, when at least one individual showed me the arrangement of his academic study and personal shrine, side by side in the same room. And it was not unusual for Buddhologists to teach their academic classes immediately preceding or following a shared session of meditation practice. When the American Academy of Religion last held its annual meeting in Kansas City, I attended a dinner with seven other academic Buddhologists, all of whom were Buddhists. One of my favorite memories of Calgary, where I held the Numata Chair of Buddhist Studies in Fall 1993, revolves around my first visit to the home of Professor A.W. Barber. Not

only was his hospitality superb, but his Buddhist shrine was elegant, *and it was the first thing he showed me in his home*. To be sure, the descriptions that might be offered are very plentiful. My best estimate is that another factor of *at least* 25 percent is almost certainly Buddhist, but very careful not to make public expressions of its religiosity, for fear of professional reprisal, keenly felt or perceived.

The second question is perhaps not so difficult to assess as the first. As one surveys the vast corpus of literature that surrounds the academic programs sponsored by numerous American Buddhist groups, the names of academic scholars of Buddhism have begun to dominate the roster of invited presenters, and these individuals are almost exclusively Buddhists. At a recent conference on Buddhism in America, held in Boston in January 1997, one practitioner playfully confided that he wondered if such occasions as this might be thought of as a 'Pro Tour for Buddhologists', as he clamored off to hear Professor Robert Thurman deliver a Keynote Address titled 'Toward American Buddhism'. In other words, many American Buddhist masters have come to acknowledge and incorporate the professional contributions of these American Buddhist scholar-practitioners into the religious life of their communities, recognizing the unique and vital role they fulfill. Even a casual perusal of the seminar-retreat schedule at an important American Buddhist center like Zen Mountain Monastery, for example, reveals a more than ample sprinkling of scholar-practitioners as presenters. Similar results can be found in virtually all the Buddhist traditions and centers operative on the North American continent.

This is a new and emerging phenomenon as well. In 1977, I attended a well-planned and carefully executed conference at Syracuse University, devoted to the ambitious theme of 'The Flowering of Buddhism in America'. Despite the academic-sounding titles of many of the presentations, nearly all of the

papers were prepared by non-academic practitioners. Seventeen years later, when the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, California sponsored a semester long symposium called 'Buddhisms in America: An Expanding Frontier', every single participant had impressive academic credentials, and more than two-thirds of the nearly twenty presenters were Buddhist practitioners.

Ray Hart concludes in his investigation of religious and theological studies in American higher education, published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, that the data 'cannot be reported in a form that is statistically meaningful' (Hart 1991, 763). I would argue, instead, that the data in my surveys are absolutely meaningful in evaluating the productivity of Buddhist Studies scholars, and in beginning to demonstrate how the discipline defines itself. In collating the data in my surveys, and evaluating the narrative statements submitted, two clear sentiments emerged. The first, which was quite obvious, reflected the number of colleagues who came to the study of Buddhism, and to academe, as a result of their strong personal commitment to Buddhism as a religious tradition; or those who cultivated a commitment to the personal practice of Buddhism as a result of their academic endeavors. For many in this first group, this has created a powerful tension between scholarship and religious commitment, between Buddhology and personal faith. The second sentiment seemed to signal a shift away from Buddhist texts and philosophy (the Buddhist 'theology' which some of us have been accused of propagating), toward an investigation of Buddhism's contextual relationship with culture. Or, as José Cabezón puts it,

> There is today a call for the increased investigation of alternative semiotic forms – oral and vernacular traditions, epigraphy, ritual, patterns of social and institutional evolution, gender, lay and folk traditions, arts archaeology and architecture ... The critique is really a call for greater balance and holism within the field; it is not only a demand that equal recognition be given to new areas of research, but a call for

> an integrated and mutually interpenetrating research program aimed at the understanding of Buddhism as a multi-faceted entity. (Cabezón 1995, 262-263)

Recently, Jan Nattier reviewed Donald Lopez's fine volume entitled *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism*. To be sure, Nattier is correct when she outlines some of the issues still lacking in the volume: a consideration of the difference in outlook and methodology between specialists in Tibetan Buddhism and those of Chinese Buddhism, variations in the training and perspective between Buddhist Studies scholars trained in Religious Studies departments and those who were trained in Area Studies Programs, those who have had a personal dialogue with a Buddhist community and those not so involved, and a consideration of the 'rifts' in North American Buddhist Studies (Nattier 1997, 484). Yet, after praising Lopez for his frankness and willingness, as an American Buddhologist, to discuss his own encounter with Buddhism, she concludes by saying,

> If there are difficulties here, they are not with the keen and self-critical eye with which Lopez reflects on his own experience as a student of Buddhism but with the degree to which he generalizes from that experience to characterize prevailing attitudes in the Buddhist Studies field at large. (Nattier 1997, 480)

Whether these generalizations are correct or not remains to be seen. At least the question has now moved beyond Father Lamotte's concern with being *hérétique*.

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Part II

A Re-Definition of the Relationship between Economics and Spirituality

Money: The Global Power of an Illusion. A Buddhist Perspective

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Translated from German by
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Abstract

The global power of money cannot be overlooked. Nevertheless, economic sciences explain the phenomenon of money only insufficiently. The illusions that are inherent to money cannot be accounted for within the framework of Western ideas of substance. In contrast to that, Buddhist logic explains illusions as circular structures without any separate identity. This is systematically elaborated by means of the concept of money. At the same time it is shown how the three poisons ('greed, anger, ignorance') can be reconstructed in the greed for money, in competition, and in the belief in notional values of money as an economic reality. Interdependence, the heart of Buddhist philosophy, over and again asserts itself against egoistic dissociation and rivalry. From a subjective perspective, this process is equivalent to the practice of compassion, the fundament of Buddhist business ethics.

Introduction

In Buddhist ethics, priority is given to the qualities of non-violence and compassion: 'All those who suffer in the world do so because of their desire for their own happiness. All those happy in the world are so because of their desire for the happiness of others.'[1] In this, it directly opposes the prevailing economic

[1] Śāntideva 1996, 99.

ideology, whose central idea was expressed by Adam Smith as follows: 'It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love'[2]. The Buddhist critique of egoism, however, is not derived from a moral norm, but from the insight that wrong thought causes suffering. In so far as Buddhism deals with deluded forms of thought, it is a *critical philosophy*. Buddha is described as teaching 'with differentiation, he does not teach here in a one-sided way'[3]. Consequently, the Buddhist teaching is described as 'the discriminative, differentiating, analytical or critical teaching'[4] (*vibhajjavāda*). 'Criticism is the very essence of Buddha's teaching'[5]. 'Buddhism is criticism'[6].

We can apply this teaching to some of the recent literature that focuses on consumerism, ecological problems, women's and children's rights, general questions of justice, etc., under the rubric of economics.[7] The critical potential offered by Buddhist tradition, and most of all by the Madhyamaka philosophy, has not been much in evidence in these discussions. Yet, it is the central subject of Madhyamaka philosophy to show the immanent untenability of existing forms of thought – not from a perspective of nihilism, of which Nāgārjuna has often been accused, but from the realization that erroneous thought is the

[2] Smith 1976, 26f.

[3] Nyānaponika Thera / Bhikkhu Bodhi (transl.), 1999, Vol. 5, p. 260 (=Aṅguttara Nikāya 10.94, PTS, Vol. V, 190).

[4] Nyānatiloka / Nyānaponika. 1984, Vol. 5, 133, note 119 (commentary on the quotation above; original text in German). *Annotation by the translator:* In the English selected edition based on the complete translation into German it says: 'a discriminative, differentiating doctrine', see Nyānaponika Thera / Bhikkhu Bodhi (transl.), 1999, p. 314, n. 63.

[5] Murti 1980, 8.

[6] Hakamaya 1997, 56.

[7] Schumacher 1965; Payutto 1994; Harvey 2000.

cause of all suffering and an obstacle on the way to liberation. Even so, the attempt to sustain a systematic and pertinent critique of modern economic science, and especially of the theory of money, performed in the tradition of Nālandā, say, has been very limited up to the present day.[8] In the following I will draft the outline of how such a critique could be formulated. For this, I will need to sketch out some of the fundamental concepts of Buddhist psychology and of Madhyamaka logic in order to develop them so that they can be applied to the problems of the theory of money and, by extension, to the reality perceived in global capitalism. Some considerations about the responsibility of Engaged Buddhism will conclude this essay.

The Three Poisons

According to the Buddhist idea, human action is governed by a defiled motivation. These defilements may be subsumed in the concept of the three poisons: greed, hatred, and delusion (Pāli: *lobha, dosa, moha*; Sanskrit: *lobha, dveṣa, moha*). These three poisons constitute the process wherein the ego constructs its domain to defend the illusion of the thought of 'I'. In fact, the human personality is interlinked in various ways with other human and living beings, with nature and with mental phenomena. In this interdependency, an independent 'acting human entity' is illusory. It is generated through the grasping of transient objects (greed) and the defending of the objects grasped (hatred) on the basis of an illusory idea of the self (delusion).

In Buddhist practice, we come to realize the illusoriness of this process. Two core methods to achieve this can be identified: first, the careful analysis of conscious processes, which are permeated with illusory thoughts; and secondly, the development of compassion as a remedy against the three poisons. The

[8] Alexandrin 1993; Loy 1991; Brodbeck 2001, 2002, 2006.

practice of compassion is not a superficial moral rule here, but instead is based on the insight into that state of interdependence and, at the same time, into the emptiness of all phenomena, which have no immanent substance, no ego, and no nature of self (*svabhāva*). Consequently, the practice of compassion is nothing but the highest form of Buddhist knowledge, that insight into the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of all phenomena which is transformed into action. This means that, in Buddhism, ethics cannot be separated from epistemology.

Instead, compassionate ethical action is a way of embedding a cognitive practice in one's everyday environment, based on the realization of the interdependence of all phenomena, whose emptiness, in turn, serves to substantiate and justify ethical action. That is why there is no 'value-neutral' theory of human action. Each and every cognition of social processes hides a moral judgment, and so every theory that appears to be 'value-neutral' is, in truth, an *implicit ethics*.

Indeed, the core diagnosis in the Buddha's teaching is that all frustration and all suffering are rooted in knowledge that has been diverted from its object. Nevertheless, in everyday reality the truth about this repressed knowledge of the concept of a substantial 'I', becomes apparent: it is an illusion that cannot withstand the test of experience. In the end it is wrong thinking that is responsible for the suffering in the world. The public sphere of communication is contaminated by concepts that are proven to be delusions by the fact that, by holding on to them, people expose themselves again and again to the most varied forms of undesirable situations.

So we don't have the simple option of drawing a moral doctrine from the spirit of Buddha's teaching to place it alongside economic practice in order to tame the economy. The nature of social and economic actions is created by forms of thought and as a result of a motivation which all prove to be illusory. Economic practice will always be shaped and governed by

forms of thought which have suffering as their consequence, unless it takes the mutual interdependency of all social and natural phenomena as its foundation.

Madhyamaka Logic

Admittedly, so far this general diagnosis remains a mere assertion unless we systematically and rationally explain it on the basis of its subject: economics. Thus, in the present text, I will select one central subject – namely money and connected phenomena – to test validity of the Buddhist critique. To do so, I will discuss those forms of thought where the science of economics describes money and the markets. If Buddhist analysis is factually veridical, an assumption that has never been doubted by the tradition, we ought to see this work out in practice. For this, substantial support is provided by Buddhist logic and Madhyamaka's critique of knowledge.

Madhyamaka logic is peculiar in that it is, at the same time, an ontological critique. Ontology is about the definition of being: what is the meaning of words like 'really' or 'it *is*'? The general critique of Madhyamaka philosophy is that this ontological definition gives us an illusion of 'being a self' (*svabhāva*): in everyday life, objects are interpreted in such a way as if they had a cause, a being, a core or a mainstay in themselves. In this context, Madhyamaka dialectics has the demystifying function of demonstrating that this implicit assumption about the nature of objects is an *illusion*. The Madhyamaka critique operates to uncover this illusion in all of its various manifestations.

The specific logic of this form of thought, however, has been heatedly discussed by the different Buddhist schools already. Yet, it would go beyond the scope of this essay to consider in any detail the special features and different opinions brought

into play by Indian[9], Tibetan[10], Chinese[11] and recently also Japanese[12] Buddhism.

A safe approach that will help us avoid the detour into scholastic disputations is to prove the Madhyamaka form of thought by means of a special object. At the same time, the substantial difference between Buddhist and traditional European logic can be demonstrated here. I will develop this more systematically about the subject of money. To do this, I will have recourse to a figure of speech that appears in Nāgārjuna's *Vigrahavyāvartaṇī*. The passage runs: 'Supposing somebody said: the son is to be produced by the father, and that father is to be produced by that very son, tell me who is to be produced by whom.'[13]

Nāgārjuna uses this example as a model for all forms of logical reasoning, where a definition (*pramāṇa*) gains its meaning only by the defined (*prameya*), and vice versa. A cause cannot be thought without an effect, a reason not without a consequence, etc. Everyday thinking is entangled in such circular forms of thought and has a permanent tendency to reify the poles of a relation (like father-son). One cannot think a father without thinking a 'child', and vice versa.

However, this is not merely about *forms of thought*, but also about experienced reality: The delusive forms of thought are *at the same time* what we refer to as 'reality'. If *social facts* are considered, another factor becomes relevant here: (delusive) forms of thought are what generate nothing less than social reality, or, as Buddhist tradition would call it, the 'karmic vision'. Indeed, the reason for all human suffering, not least in

[9] Ruegg 1981; Della Santina 1986; Wood 1994.
[10] Hopkins 1983; Pettit 1999; Williams 2000.
[11] Cheng 1991; King 1991.
[12] Hubbard and Swanson 1997.
[13] Nāgārjuna 1998, 123. Cf. 'A father is not a son, a son is not a father. Neither exists except in correlation with the other. Nor are they simultaneous.' Nāgārjuna: Śūnyatāsapti 13, in: Lindtner 1997, 99. Cf. to this circular logic: Brodbeck 2002a.

the field of economy, is that this illusion, based as it is on karmic vision, is not understood in its true nature.

Economic Explanations of Money

In modern capitalism, economic processes are transacted through the market and by means of money. Here it is useful to investigate more closely how these processes are explained by different economic theories. To do so, I will proceed in the same way that the Madhyamikas demonstrate the logical fallacies of contemporary systems of thought: it is proven that the claimed positions are *unthinkable* and are *bound* to get entangled in contradictions, exactly because they are formulated on the untenable foundation of substance metaphysics, the fiction of a self (*ātman*) of persons or objects.

At a first glance, one might think that, as the result of this, there is a certain closeness of Buddhism and the economic theory prevailing today (*neoclassical economics*) because the latter is definitely a *rational theory*. It describes human action as the result of rational decisions. 'Human action is purposeful behaviour.'[14] At a first glance, this understanding seems to correspond with the Buddhist teaching which is expressed as follows in the first verse of the Dharmapada [Pāli: *Dhammapada*]: 'Phenomena are preceded by the mind, ruled by the mind.' Also in the Abhidharma [Pāli: *Abhidhamma*], in its explanation of dependent origination, consciousness (*vijñāna*) precedes the manifested action in different situations.[15] But this superficial similarity does not smooth away the fundamental differences. According to Buddhist understanding, thinking and consciousness

[14]Mises 1966, 11.

[15]Of the twelve factors of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), *vijñāna* (consciousness) is the third factor, followed by *nāma-rūpa*, existence in a body, that forms the basis of all kinds of experience and action connected with it.

are always *conditioned*, but not in terms of an entity existing in itself as claimed by economists, who in this are the heirs of Cartesian philosophy. The latter define action as individual, as the causal activity of an ego: 'It is beyond doubt that the practice of considering fellow men as beings who think and act as I, the Ego, do has turned out well'.[16]

Accordingly, the Ego, the entity of the acting human, is presupposed as an axiom. This entity corresponds to the liberal fiction that society has come into existence by a social contract, in which rational, but also egoist individuals agree on a property order to the advantage of all parties. This contract theory has been much criticized; I mention this only because it corresponds to a concept which, in theory of economy, Schumpeter calls 'methodological individualism'[17]. The starting point of the analysis in modern economics is an entity (*consumer, firm*) that makes decisions *independently* of all others. Contact among people only exists in the form of *exchange*. Markets create society by way of exchange processes. According to a well-known simile, money serves only as a sort of lubricant: money 'is none of the wheels of trade: It is the oil which renders the motion of the wheels more smooth and easy.'[18] Exchange becomes necessary by the division of labour which is axiomatically introduced as a precondition. Another thesis claims that money is only an indicator of the exchange value of goods. Exchange value itself is interpreted differently by various schools. Originally, gold was attributed a permanent intrinsic value that was intended to express the value of goods.

As the discussion of economics developed, however, it became apparent that these original premises couldn't be maintained.

[16] Mises 1966, 24. The German wording of the original text differs somewhat: 'Das Ich ist die Einheit des handelnden Menschen. Es ist fraglos gegeben und kann durch kein Denken aufgelöst werden.' Mises, 1940, 34.
[17] Schumpeter 1908, 88: 'methodologischer Individualismus'.
[18] Hume 1826, 317.

On one hand, the gold standard has long been gone; on the other hand, the value of gold obviously depends on the amount available, as for instance its decline in price after the discovery of the gold sources in South America in the 15th and 16th centuries, which resulted in a general inflation. Presently, the more ambitious approaches explain money essentially by two more theories: (1) by the thesis that money is only a (special) commodity which was generated by an evolutionary process from isolated barter to general exchange. Accordingly, real money must always derive its value from some metal (metalism). (2) From an alternative perspective, money is regarded as an indicator standardised by the state (nominalism).

The first one of these theses, developed by Carl Menger, is a mere *exchange theory*. Here, the argument is as follows: the division of labour is at the same time a division of needs. Everyone has many needs, but produces only a few products, in contrast to peasant cultures that were, essentially, self-supporting. Consequently, everyone has to barter his products against other products that satisfy his needs. Here, however, an insurmountable problem exists: Whoever has grown a certain sort of vegetables and is in need of shoes will have to find a bartering partner who, symmetrically, has produced shoes and needs exactly this sort of vegetables. For many products, the probability that this will coincide is close to zero. Yet, Menger solves this problem by the following consideration: by and by, people discovered that barter could also be made *indirectly* and so become a general exchange economy. At first, a vegetable is bartered against salt, for example, which in comparison is a widely needed good, and then barters this salt against shoes. Carl Menger recognises the *incentive* for this in the egoism of the *economic man*: by indirect exchange, a speculative exchange profit can be gained in addition, namely by the 'exploitation of existing opportunities of exchange'[19].

[19] Menger 1892.

Motivated in this way egoism, stirred up by the 'difficulties of exchange', automatically produces goods that are exchanged in the evolving process of trade; and finally, a special good is left: money.

This explanation of money has been varied several times, even in the form of computer simulations in virtual societies, consisting of rational egoists competing with each other. But none of these explanations can be *reconstructed rationally*. They fail by their own preconditions: the 'difficulties of exchange' can only emerge and be solved 'in an evolutionary process', and 'opportunities of exchange' can only develop if the thing, 'exchange society', is already a precondition. But, according to Menger's own statement, this exchange society is not at all able to exist without any money, exactly because of the insurmountable difficulties of finding bartering partners. This brings up the question of how, in a thing called 'exchange society', there could possibly develop a process that would generate money first if, *without* any money, such an exchange society cannot exist. Obviously, this argument runs into a vicious circle.[20]

A second group of theories was developed that may be summed up in the formula of Georg Friedrich Knapp: 'Money is a creation of the legal system'.[21] Here, no attempt is made to explain how money arose from barter, but the state order of exchange is taken as its basis. I will let the objection pass that now the explanation is merely shifted and one would have to find arguments to explain how, then, states, and in these states markets as well, have come into existence. This 'nominalistic theory of money', which is also presupposed by the well-known

[20] This is also true for the naïve idea that money is an 'invention', which also presumes the very thing for which money is said to have been invented: exchange society. More about this problem in Brodbeck 2009a.

[21] Knapp 1921, 1.

economist John Maynard Keynes and his monetary critic Milton Friedman, seems to have solved the problem: Money is simply *put into validity* by an institution of the state, and today by the central banks.

This explanation does not fall in the same circle as Menger's evolutionary explanation of money, but it is caught up in another. There have always been, and still are, stages of development and countries where citizens *refuse* to use the money printed by the state because of inflations or for other reasons. This money does not only lose its value, it also loses its function. In a global economy there is also the fact that money must also be measured against *foreign* currencies: there is no country that could decree its currency to be valid in other countries. As is shown by the deterioration of the US dollar in recent times, this can result in a gradual undermining of the validity of money, first in foreign countries but then also at home. There is no state that could *decree* the continuing validity of money. Thus the 'money theory of the state' falls into a vicious circle again: it presupposes something which would have to be brought about by money first, namely its general recognition.

The Reason for the Failure of the Explanation of Money

What is the logical problem here? Apparently, money is of a completely different nature than the nature presupposed by traditional theories of economy. They proceed on the assumption of an *idea of substance* that exists in three forms: (1) An inherent money value, represented by gold, is presumed; (2) an entity 'exchange society', consisting of egoist individuals generating money as an evolutionary process, is presumed; (3) a state is postulated as a power which can decree values and control them. These three explanations fail in the fact that monetary

values cannot be determined as a substance, nor can they be reduced to other substantial entities (egoist individuals, exchange society, and the state). All explanations of money show a peculiar *circularity*. Money is only recognized if it has a value; and it only has a value if it is generally and widely used. This means that money does not have any value substance. This value only appears as a transitory fiction in a circular process.

From here it follows that money cannot be 'derived' or 'explained' from causes because money, as a fiction, is *empty*. Its meaning is its illusoriness and ignorance cannot be substantiated. An illusion can only be identified; then it will disappear or, at least, will lose its hold on thought and action. To use a well-known example from the Cittamātra school: if it is discovered that the perception of a snake was only an illusion because it was the erroneous perception of a *rope*, the hold of this illusion over the mind and the fear connected with it will disappear. What is peculiar, however, about the value of money and the hopes and fears connected with it lies in the fact that this value is reproduced as a collective illusion. Yet, this illusion still has its basis in the thought of individuals. As inflations or *stock market crashes* show, the illusion of monetary value can disappear overnight: prices go down, paper money loses its value, machines or houses that have just been assets in the books suddenly lose their value in a crisis and their values are recognized as an illusion even by everyday consciousness. This means that money does not even have a permanent value in a *conventional* sense. The value of money is merely created by a transitory trust in an illusion. We think and calculate in terms of an illusion; even in the smallest details of our everyday life we trust in an entity that, *in itself*, is without any substance.

At this point the logical structure can easily be recognized that was demonstrated by Nāgārjuna with the father and son example. Money can have a value only if all the market participants believe in this value. They will, in turn, believe in it

because they attribute an illusory value to money.[22] In short, money and monetary value form a circle of delusion. To an entity we have ascribed a self-nature when it does not really have one; rather, it is created in a process of delusion.

And how does this actually happen in practice? It is brought about simply by the fact *that* we *accept* money in exchange for performances or products (which means that we believe in its value) and take its unit as a basis for our *calculations*. This cognitive calculus points to the fact that money is based on a *mental process* or, in other words, on a delusion of thought. We handle our relationships with other people by calculating their performances or products in terms of the fictional monetary unit and relate them to it. People are interdependent in producing, but this interdependence is not consciously realized because it is conveyed by monetary calculation. Thus, calculating in money becomes an illusory foundation of more and more social interactions.

The socialisation (*Vergesellschaftung*) generated by people's thinking is that by which human relationships and compassion for others are superimposed on and shaped by a *fundamental delusion,* which consists in calculating in terms of money. In monetary calculation, the poison of ignorance takes a social form.

Money itself shows us clearly that it lacks a nature of its own: it is always taken only transitorily and can fulfil its function only if it is spent again. When in the old times Buddhist philosophers wanted to explain in how far the world of appearances is a delusion, they used complicated examples of magicians, of eye diseases or a fata morgana: 'Karma is not born from conditions and by no means from non-conditions, for karma-forma-

[22] Marx 1967, 63: 'For instance, one man is king only because other men stand in the relation of subject to him. They, on the contrary, imagine that they are subjects because he is king.'

tions are like an illusion, a city of gandharvas, and a mirage.'[23] Today in our economy we merely have to read one of the leading business journals to observe the reach of failed illusions in the stock markets, futures contracts, or on the real estate markets. We can *experience* how monetary values are an illusory, instable basis upon which people plan and coordinate their actions, which has disastrous consequences again and again.

The attempt to explain economic phenomena using Madhyamaka's logic is not an approach *from outside*, or a criticism from an *external* perspective. Though such a procedure is quite common in science, it does not comply with Nāgārjuna's method. He proves the untenability of a form of thought – measured by its own claim – *in its own categories*. I would like to sketch this briefly with respect to the methodological guiding principle of economics: modern economics follow a declared physicalism. The ideal of explaining human action (individually or in large groups) by calculable 'mechanisms' is absolutely adapted to the physics paradigm. The success of natural sciences rests on their ability to provide *valid predictions*. Economists emulate this ideal: 'The ultimate goal of a positive science is the development of a "theory" or "hypothesis" that yields valid and meaningful (i.e., not truistic) predictions about phenomena not yet observed.'[24] If human action could in fact be understood reductively by 'mechanisms', human liberty and creativity would remain an unexplained mystery, but it should actually be possible to predict the course of the economy. However, a glimpse at literature reveals that economists have failed miserably to do so, measured by their own ideal of being able to provide forecasts.[25]

In fact, the social function of the predictions of economic sciences is completely different from predicting *incidents*. Econo-

[23] Nāgārjuna: Śūnyatāsapti 36, in: Lindtner 1997, 107.
[24] Friedman 1953, 7.
[25] Brodbeck 2002b.

mists are, in actual fact, expressing a hidden *morality* when they constantly repeat the erroneous thought that markets have an autonomous, self-like nature, which allows them to be subject to mathematical explanation and policy recommendations. The function of economics in the social process is that, on the basis of its own delusion, actions are again and again programmed to be egoistic. Formulated in the jargon of economists, behaviour must be steered by 'incentives'. Here, the claim is that humans are, at least genetically, programmed to be egoists, and only by external force (laws, taxes, interest rates or prices) is it possible to steer them according to certain political objectives. But recommendations that are given on the basis of wrong thoughts must permanently reproduce suffering. *That* such thoughts, even measured by their own claim, are invalid, is daily shown in the fate of the ever renewed predictions about stock markets, interest rates, exchange rates, or other sorts of prices. On the day after, or in the following week or year, the old prediction (which, as a rule, will have proven to have been erroneous) will have long been forgotten, replaced by a new one in its turn. By this, even a neutral observer should begin to see that, obviously, this is not an actual science, which it claims to be, but an erroneous form of thinking. At the base of this error is the ignorance of the illusory, circular nature of money.

The Monetary Form of the Three Poisons

The illusion of money directly controls all market participants. The market is the social site in which acts of exchange are performed. But only those possessing money can enter this location; and only who can perform (unskilled labour, for example) or who possesses a commodity that is in demand will be able to gain possession of money. Gained with hard struggles, the money will be spent for daily needs. This means that the relationship among the mass of people is transacted by a process

whereby the transient possession of money alternates with a state of lack, leading to striving for money again. No matter which material form money may take – gold, paper money, or a figure on a computer screen –, it is a *limited* amount. The conveyance of all the processes of labour division happens in such a way that, by calculating in the fictional abstraction of the monetary unit, people become possessors of money only *impermanently*. Thus, after having made their purchases, they must strive for money again if they still want to be part of the game. In these processes, the striving for the acquisition or increase of money becomes the central motivation of acting on markets.

What is shown by the striving for money and for *still more* money is *greed*, one of the three root poisons besides the poison of *ignorance*, the deception about monetary values. In ancient times, the greed for money was already regarded to be a typical example of greed in general. Plato, for instance, divides the human soul in three parts. He states of the third of these parts that '[…] our calling it the money-loving […] part' is justified.[26] Without doubt Buddhist psychology, as formulated in the Abhidharma, recognizes manifold, differentiated forms, in each of which the illusion of the ego is reproduced by greed and grasping. But when we generalize to the entire plutocracy on our planet, the *greed for money* becomes the primary form of wrong motivation and threatens to superimpose itself on all other forms.

Now the third of the three poisons can be easily identified in its specific appearance in economy as well. Every sum of money grasped by an ego becomes its *property*. In a monetary economy, the defence of ego territories takes the form of demarcation of property rights, which at the same time is institutionalised by a legal system and the power of the state. Property in monetary wealth excludes the *other* people who are also striving for money. The greed for money, so to speak, encoun-

[26] Plato: Republic, Book IX (581a), transl. by Paul Shorey.

ters itself on the markets; it meets itself in a fellow being who has turned into an aggressive competitor. Money is no longer sought after in an abstract form, but competitors turn against each other to expand their ego territory, within or without the relevant, accepted legal or moral rules. Competition even harbours the tendency to set aside impinging moral limits in the long run, having monetary calculation and the greed for money as its ignorant basis and motivation.

Consequently, we can identify the three poisons not only in terms of the individual, psychological concept of the Buddhist practice of training the mind. It becomes apparent that ignorance has taken a *social form*. This social form of ignorance is at the same time *institutionalised*. Calculation in money has profoundly changed human subjectivity in the two or three millennia in which money has been used. In reality, what is called 'ratio' in modern times is mainly *calculating thought*. All facts are subjugated to a calculus, estimation, and valuation. Hobbes expresses this attitude very clearly: 'By ratiocination, I mean computation.'[27] Also the sources of mathematics can easily be recognized in monetary calculation.[28] Even in natural sciences this programme turns out to function. But it functions in a very *one-sided* way. If nature is merely perceived from the perspective of numbers, we can't form a picture of the interdependence of all natural phenomena and, what is more, we come to adopt a position *outside* of nature. This position of 'I think = I calculate', so I am (by myself, separated from everything else), which was especially developed by Descartes, is the form in which the money using or monetary subject itself reflects itself in its ignorance. Modern nature perception is based on this Cartesian standpoint.[29]

[27] Hobbes 1962, Part I, Chapter 1, § 2.
[28] Cf. Leonardo 2003.
[29] Brodbeck 2009, 146 sqq and 220 sqq; 2009a, part 5.

The consequences of this attitude become more and more obvious: admittedly, we do succeed in submitting more and more elements of natural processes to the control of calculation and thus, finally, to economic exploitation, but only at the price of a systematic blindness towards the interdependence that governs natural processes (of which, in ecology, we become conscious again). In the meantime, the exploitation of nature under the abstract measure of monetary calculation has advanced so far as to claim ever more parts or elements of nature as *private property* (patent rights on genetic material, forms of nature, living beings, etc.). One may say that the ecological problems that we presently have to face are the karmic consequences of the ignorant perception of nature, which in turn is rooted in the calculating thought that stands for the totality of cognition in the monetary subject.

In general, private property, as an abstract concept, is simply the reverse of abstract monetary property. Societies without a dominating monetary calculation always have concrete relationships and dependencies of people and objects. It is monetary calculation only that measures everything by the same standards and calculates it in a fictional unit. In fact, however, this is another illusion – or, to say it less politely, the ignorance inherent in monetary calculation is plain narrow-mindedness. A person who, for example, is the owner of a company will still be dependent on various factors: surrounding nature, the legal system that protects his property (with police power, if necessary), connectedness with society by infrastructure, qualified employees, raw materials, etc. By the assessment in money (= balance sheet), an artificial cut is made by which business processes and their control are subjugated to an 'ego centre' which organises its acts in a fictional unit (money).

A very early institutionalised form of the greed for money is *interest*. The demand for interest simply conceals the greed for *more money*. The interconnectedness of people by markets and

monetary calculation is used and also presumed; while at the same time it is *abused*, when the connectivity of the division of labour succeeds in creating hoarded up money or lends money out for the purpose of demanding *more money* than the lent amount from the debtors. In ancient times, this form of interhuman exchange was morally banned in general. Buddha even regarded the mere taking of money as a danger and forbid the Saṅgha to do so. In Islam, the taking of interest is prohibited, but not exchange; in Judaism, the taking of interest among 'brothers' is forbidden, but allowed to take from strangers. In Christianity, a strict prohibition of usury or the taking of interest was valid for almost two thousand years; but first Calvinism and later also Catholicism adapted to the advancing capitalism and permitted the taking of interest.

The Reality of Economic Illusion: the Suffering of the Many

Today, the institutionalised greed for money has become so widespread that ignorance has taken on a planetary dimension. Globally, financial markets dominate almost every other spheres of life. Companies increasingly submit to shareholders' interests. The simple maximization of profits has been pushed into the background by the *performance* of securities (assets). Money itself has assumed an almost unlimited abundance of forms: in addition to the actual money of the central banks and besides bonds and securities, many forms of derivatives have come into existence. In response to this, central banks have recently been compelled to abandon the definition and control of a 'money supply' to a large extent.

The results stemming from this form of socialisation generated by money are no secret. The interdependence of humans and nature on this planet is not being transformed by discourse,

sensible planning, the balancing of needs and the possibilities to satisfy them into some tangible action, governed by compassion. On the contrary: global relations are mainly based on the abstract weighing of monetary values which at the same time compete with each other as national currencies and repeatedly trigger off exchange rate turbulences. All property claims, however, are measured in monetary values and defended against each other in economic competition. In these processes, the ego can take many forms that are social as well, which extends to nationalism or collective egoism. Consequently, economic competition is increasingly fought out as a competition of states and armed forces.

For most people, the consequences are devastating. Here are just a few references: The global *distribution* of monetary income is extremely unequal, and this gap is ever growing wider. 'An analysis of long-term trends in world income distribution (between countries) shows that the distance between the richest and poorest country was about 3 to 1 in 1820, 11 to 1 in 1913, 35 to 1 in 1950, 44 to 1 in 1973 and 72 to 1 in 1992.'[30] The gap is also widening within the developed countries: 'The wealthiest nation on Earth has the widest gap between rich and poor of any industrialized nation.'[31] If it is not countries but persons, the picture is still darker: 'The richest 5 percent of the world's people have incomes 114 times those of the poorest 5 percent.'[32] Of the 2.2 billion children worldwide, one billion lives in poverty. According to information provided by UNICEF, 27,000 children starve each day; and there is a deadly shortage of the most fundamental necessity, clean drinking water: 'Access to water for life is a basic human need and a fundamental human right. Yet in our increasingly prosperous world, more than 1 billion people are denied the right to clean water

[30] Human Development Report 1999, 38.
[31] The Corporate Planet. 1997.
[32] World distribution. 2007.

and 2.6 billion people lack access to adequate sanitation. These headline numbers capture only one dimension of the problem. Every year some 1.8 million children die as a result of diarrhoea and other diseases caused by unclean water and poor sanitation.'[33]

At the same time, however, there are now sufficient technological, agricultural and economic means to end this global misery. According to UNO, worldwide foodstuff production could feed 12 billion people. While 2.4 billion people have to live on less than 1.25 US dollar per day,[34] worldwide 1.34 billion US dollar were spent on armament in 2008 for one year (of which the U.S.A. alone spent 550 billion). This amount would be sufficient to more than double the income of two thirds of the world population. Even a small proportion of it would be enough to provide clean drinking water, sufficient education and primary health care for everyone all over the world. For this calculation, luxury consumption was not considered, for example 105 billion US dollar spent in Europe alone for alcoholic beverages, 50 billion for cigarettes, or 17 billion for perfume in Europe and the U.S.A.[35]

This shows clearly that it is not a shortage of resources that generates global poverty, which increasingly leads to widespread poverty in the developed countries, too. The suffering on this planet is conditioned by the specific organisation of our society, based as it is on illusory forms of thought, and gives a special, 'modern' form to the three poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance. People experience the reality created by themselves by these illusory forms of thought on the basis of monetary cal-

[33] Human Development Report 2006, V.

[34] 'By the new measurements (recalibrated at $ 1.25 a day, KHB) 1.4 billion people are living in extreme poverty – more than one-quarter of the population of developing countries.' Worldbank, Poverty data: A supplement to World Development indicators 2008, 1.

[35] Source: http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Facts.asp (26 November 2007).

culation as an alien force. They give a fictive nature of 'self' to the deceptive form of their interdependence by way of the markets in the manifold forms of monetary competition. They bow down before something they are creating themselves as a global delusion; and, in the atomised form taken by their ego-process, in the deceptive shape of monetary calculation, repeated by billions of people, they are driven into illusory ideas and poisoned motivations, ranging from everyday aggression to hatred in its national or religious shape which, at present, takes its toll in 14 wars all over the world.[36]

The Buddhist diagnosis that the actions of humans are based on *ignorance* (Pāli: *avijjā*, Sanskrit: *avidyā*), and that from this ignorance, becoming manifest in the three poisons, unwholesome actions will follow, becomes breathtakingly visible if it is applied to economic processes. What is feared as a global, practical constraint, or as an alien force, is created by people themselves. What is more, they create this on the basis of wrong thinking. Delusion as a global process reproduces itself with fatal consequences. Ignorant thought, which – as it is said in the already mentioned first verse of the Dharmapada – is followed by suffering 'like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox', is not a product of an *individual*. The Buddha's teaching would be misunderstood if we took ignorance to be the product of an 'ego'. Rather the ego itself is interdependently produced as an ignorant process, for which the *forms of thought* play an important role.

The Challenges of Engaged Buddhism

The great teachers of Nālandā and those traditions that followed them saw it as their most noble task to expose and criticize contemporary systems of thought *as processes of ignorance*.

[36] SIPRI 2008.

Whereas, in the first five centuries in India, these were many other philosophical systems, scholastic interpretations of the Abhidharma or extreme assertions within the Buddhist schools, in modern times the forms of thought have multiplied. Of these, the most important system of thought, which provides the basis of the reproduction of the deceptive views of economy and society and is communicated in schools, universities and (most of) the media, is modern economics. A Buddhist economics, schooled in Buddhist logic and the Madhyamaka, faces the challenge to realize anew, with respect to the ignorant forms of thought of present times, what Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, Asaṅga, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti and others achieved in their own times with respect to the then prevailing systems of thought.

Thus, to my way of understanding it, Engaged Buddhism faces *two* challenges which, however, arise from one common realization: on one hand the task of the critique of forms of thought which necessarily result in suffering (because they are based on the illusion of an I and a substantial self); on the other hand the practice of compassion by which interdependence is immediately experienced and raised into the individual consciousness as a practical task.

In the spirit of the second issue, many initiatives have already developed from Engaged Buddhism:[37] Buddhists engage themselves in social movements, in the peace movement, for women's and children's rights, they support the ecology movement, etc. Yet, these are mostly more distant effects of a basically ignorant attitude in economy. If this ignorance is to be identified in its core, Engaged Buddhism faces the great challenge of uncovering the roots of this ignorance. Here, Buddhists must not shrink from criticising the dominant sciences – with clarity as to the subject, but always benevolently and mildly with respect to persons.

[37] Cf. Queen and King 1996; 2005; http://www.buddhanetz.org.

From the realization of the emptiness of all phenomena because of their interdependence, all those forms of thought may be critically identified in as much as they all introduce a substance as their means of justification. In economy, this is the thesis of *homo oeconomicus*, which proceeds on the assumption of independent egos and from which the market is construed, whereby this egoism is ideologically justified as 'rational action'. Here as well, the form of deception can be identified that is based on the assumption of independent entities that are worshipped as 'the monetary value' or 'the market'. Economists who claim that the laws of the market are quasi natural laws tend to assume a totalitarian attitude. Obeisance towards the market is demanded, as in Friedrich A. von Hayek with his claim that it is 'the function of *prices* to tell people what they should do.'[38] It is prices that are put in a position to tell us what to do. It is not sensible and compassionate women and men who harmonize their decisions and actions, but an anonymous mechanism is placed in this position, which will be used by few to their own advantage – with the already mentioned result of extreme global inequality and poverty.

It is really the abstract, ignorant form of money which rules the world markets and, as stated by economists, mankind should blindly follow its command. Compassion is even stigmatised as a severe vice by the market purists. Ayn Rand speaks of 'the virtue of selfishness'[39]. Market processes would only be hindered from efficiently exerting their function by 'the persistence of instinctual feelings of altruism and solidarity'[40]. Through egoist interests and without consulting anyone, a natural law is expected to be revealed, a thought which is among the core principles of classical economics and political theory: '[…] the laws of commerce, which are the laws of nature, and

[38] Hayek 1996, 272.
[39] Rand 1964.
[40] Hayek 1989, 64.

consequently the laws of God'[41]. Here it becomes also obvious that Buddhism has to formulate its criticism as a non-theistic religion, at least in an *ontological* sense. All ideas of this kind reveal themselves to be, by their internal contradictions, mistakes in reasoning. There is no individual substance of an I, nor is there any 'super-subject' hidden behind the object that could endow them with a substantial validity. Furthermore, compassion and altruism are a highly rational attitude of Buddhist analysis and practice that is to be trained by cognition and meditation practice, but certainly not an 'instinctual feeling' of an earlier stage of the development of mankind, as it is for Hayek.

A typical feature of modern sciences that can be observed for the markets and for money is the tendency to regard human life and the mind, or spirit, as a mere object that is ruled by practical constraints; this characteristic can also be observed in almost any science that concerns itself with human beings or with the human body. Psychology reduces anything happening in the mind to neurological processes; neurosciences reduce their explanations to a biological, chemical, and physical basis; and biology reduces life to chemical components. At an early stage of their development already, economy and sociology have reduced mental processes to class relations, market processes or the interaction of egoist decisions. The traditional models of the economy express themselves in terms of mechanics and render homage to a pronounced mathematical physicalism.[42] Already the *method* of these sciences of man is, in its *logical form*, a *privation* of compassion: the fellow creature is an object of scientific manipulation by *incentives*, but not a living being with emotions and a mind. In all these attempts to analyse human mind in its mechanical causes, an ideological imposition is concealed, wherein the pressure imposed by the markets or states on people is taken to be 'natural'. In this context it is of

[41] Burke 1999, 81.
[42] Vgl. Mirowski 1989; Brodbeck 2009.

particular importance to reveal the manifold misjudgements and wrong conclusions that make up this fundamental attitude towards human thought and action. This task emphasises again the central insight of Buddhist tradition, namely that into our unwillingness to take responsibility for our own actions, and that the reductionist replacement of them by social, psychological, neurological or genetic mechanisms fundamentally obscures the possibilities of the human mind.

That is why Engaged Buddhism has not only the task of advocating and practicing compassion with other women, men, and other living beings and a protective way of relating to nature, but also will unfold its power only when the *mental reasons* for the condition of our planet are seen and the forms of thought at their root are scrutinized. One must not be discouraged by the fact that, indeed, a science that has been awarded Nobel prizes will be put to the test. Rather, the argumentative power of the tradition of Nālandā may be taken as a permanent example and inspiration for the making of such analyses.

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Economics and Zen. The Religious Quest for Self-Knowledge and Its Meaning in Our Modern Times

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Abstract

The economic principles of utility and rationality are among the most pervasive ideals dominating our modern everyday life. They even threaten to reduce the world's spiritual traditions to more or less useful 'goods' competing against each other in the 'market of religions'. My paper redefines this relationship between economics and spirituality in a radically different way. In the light of the Japanese Buddhist philosophy of Nishitani Keiji it shows that Buddhist spirituality is not to blindly accept the ideals of economics as its pre-given foundation. Rather, it is to confront us with the existential question why we have come to believe in those ideals in the first place. Entering into the spiritual path thus is to self-reflectively step back into the hidden ground beneath our very own feet, i.e. to critically elucidate the hidden foundations of our modern obsession with utility and rationality. It is to explore into the 'abyss' which lies hidden at the ground of our economic lives, with the aim, in Nishitani's words, 'of delving into the ground of human existence and, at the same time, searching anew for the wellsprings of reality.'

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Introduction

In the 1950s and 60s, sociologists like Peter Berger propounded the theory that modernization inevitably led to secularization. The history of the last thirty years, however, has not been kind to this prediction. Even Berger himself, in 1998, called his own thesis a 'big mistake' (Berger 1998). Instead of religion silently retreating into the private spheres of our lives, it has returned to take up space once again on the social and political agenda. Thus, questions about what role it should play in our contemporary societies have regained their pertinence. My paper attempts to present one tentative answer to these questions from the perspective of Zen Buddhism, as expounded by Japanese philosophers of the Kyōto School.[2] My choice here is by no means arbitrary. When Japan opened up its economic system to the West, with all the technological and political consequences that this entailed, the Kyōto School philosophers wanted Zen to confront the newly arising reality head on. Rather than escaping from the often painful process of modernization and retreating into the security of monastic life, they sought to transpose the living and enlightened experience of Zen into the present. Specifically, they set out to critically and creatively examine the sources that lie at the root of modernity as well as the conflicts it created: Western philosophy, science and technology. Through this project, the Kyōto School philosophers aimed to

[2] The Kyōto School was founded by NISHIDA Kitarō in the beginning of the last century. Nishida was born in Unoke, Japan on May 19, 1870. After studying Western philosophy at Tokyo University, teaching German and engaging in intense Zen meditation practice, Nishida received the appointment of assistant professor in Ethics at the Imperial University of Kyōto in 1910. In the same year, he published his first work, 'Study of the Good'. In 1913, Nishida became a professor of the history of religion, and, in 1914, of the history of philosophy at Kyōto. Among his successors have been TANABE Hajime, NISHITANI Keiji, ABE Masao and HISIMATSU Shinichi.

develop Zen into a true stronghold of free thinking in the midst of modernity by pulling out its creative potential and juxtaposing it to the context of massive changes in the lifestyles of the Japanese population. My paper is conceived not as a history of the Kyōto School, but as a continuation, in their spirit, of examining our modernity from the perspective of the sacred. In particular, I will use Zen to look at one of the most important sources of our modernity: economics. Using a Zen influenced religious interpretive framework, I will examine the meaning of religion in our globalized world of free market competition, and the meaning of economics in our resurgently religious world.

The Economics of Religion

Commonly, we put economics and religion in two separate intellectual compartments, thinking of them as two different *subject matters*, concerned with two distinct spheres in our lives. The former is about the outer world of production and commerce, the latter is about the inner world of meditation, ritual and the soul, and never the twain shall meet. The extent to which Zen practice today has become, both in the East and in the West, solely a path of individual spiritual development might be seen as a possible confirmation of this tendency; but it is a tendency that has been severely criticized by Kyōto school philosophers as mere escapism (Hisamatsu 1990). On the other hand, many economists would surely agree with this common sense perception. However, even within their field one sees signs of an incipient transformation in the way the object of the study of economics is conceived: traditionally, economics systematically reflected in various methodological ways upon a specific sphere of our lives, that is upon the world of trade and markets. But today it has increasingly come to be defined as a certain subjective mode of looking upon the *entire* world. As a

single conceptual framework, it proposes to give us a more certain and permanent control over *every* aspect of our lives. What clearly distinguishes economics as a discipline, thus, is not its subject matter any longer but its approach (Becker 1976, 5). This approach, coined by terms such as 'rational choice', 'utility' or 'profit maximization', is 'to analyze an almost endlessly varied set of problems, including the evolution of language …, church attendance ..., capital punishment …, the legal system …, the extinction of animals …, and the incidence of suicide'. And as this list continuously expands so as to include 'fertility, education, the uses of crime, marriage, social interactions, and other "sociological", "legal", and "political problems"' (Becker 1976, 8-9), it seems only natural to incorporate religious issues into it also. Our religious feelings, our being part of a religious community, even our belief in eternal life have come to be understood as dependent variables of utility maximizing functions (Iannaccone 1990). Even if we were 'suicide bombers killing in the name of God', economists would still quite confidently tell us that we are acting rationally within the framework of their approach (Weber and Coy, 2004).

The view that *all* human beings behave as prescribed by the economic approach is certainly not a problem of interest to scientific theory only, for it also says something about our *daily mentality*, reflecting a fundamental change in our common attitudes toward religion. In contemporary liberal democracies, we assume the right to freely choose our religion according to our individual preferences; so, given that economics is about preferences, shouldn't we buy into the economist's belief that we go about it in the same 'rational' manner as we chose a car? To my understanding, a fundamental tendency of our modern lives becomes visible here. This is the tendency of the economic sphere to expand *inwardly* into the depth of ourselves, so as to shape all aspects of our lives, including those of our innermost

religious experiences. As more of our daily life is embedded in the economic sphere, more of our thinking takes on an economic cast. Mostly unnoticed by us, we grow accustomed to constantly creating new data by applying computational procedures to all aspects of life. However, there is a danger hidden in this procedure, insofar as its total claim makes us blind toward other sources of creativity. Specifically, it appears to inhibit our creative capabilities along a vertical axis. This is to say, that framework in which it is possible to make fundamental criticisms of our present point of view and our whole notion of preferences. It seeks to close off the vertical search for new ways of looking at the world, to radically change perspectives. Said differently, while economics, conceived in terms of our everyday habitus or, in other words, as an exercise of prudential reason, permits us to permanently reconsider and re-evaluate everything outside us, it *tacitly* makes itself into a pre-given law that speaks from within us. We let it shape us from the depth of ourselves, far below the radar of our attention. Given these circumstances, economics is logically consistent to answer the question, 'What is religion?' by considering it to be no more than just another object for maximizing our utility, i.e., calculating our advantage. However, I argue that, from the perspective of Zen, there is yet a deeper meaning of religion waiting to be explored.

Religion as a Critical Path of Transformation

So, what is religion from a Zen perspective? To begin with, Zen surely denies that an answer to this question can possibly be given within the framework of the economic approach:

> To say that we need religion, for example, for the sake of social order, or human welfare, or public morals is a mistake, or at least a confusion of priorities. *Religion must not be considered from the*

> *viewpoint of utility*, any more than life should. A religion concerned primarily with its own utility bears witness to its own degeneration. One can ask about the utility of things like eating for the natural life, or of things like learning and the arts of culture. In fact, in such matters the question of utility should be of constant concern. Our ordinary mode of being is restricted to these levels of natural or cultural life. *But it is in breaking through that ordinary mode of being and overturning it from the ground up … that religion becomes something we need – a must for life* (Nishitani 1983, 2, my emphasis).

While it will take me the rest of my paper to unpack the full meaning of this passage, in this section I want to draw our attention to two distinguishable, yet interrelated facts: First, to Zen Buddhism's call for a fundamental transformation of our everyday economic mentality; and, second, to its demand for a critical rethinking of economics as a science. Taking up the former issue first, we can say that, for Zen, religion cannot become an object of our utility calculations. It is nonobjectifiable (Nishida 1999, 245). Neither is it simply a subjective mentality determining how we confront the world. For Zen, religion does neither lie simply without nor simply within us. Rather, it is a *transformative power*, which by means of opening up our own inner background transforms both our subjective mentality and our objective grasp of the environment (Nishitani 2004b, 126). Religion operates to change and deepen our awareness. It occurs 'when the mode of looking at and thinking about everything in terms of how it relates to us is broken through, where the mode of our living that puts ourselves at the center of everything is overturned' (Nishitani 1983, 2-3).

For Zen, religion is an 'essential conversion of our existence, of ourselves' (Nishitani 2004b, 126). It is a practice of self-emptying that effects a transition from everyday consciousness to *satori* (enlightenment); a transition that in turn requires practice or cultivation. We are, by means of seated meditation

(*zazen*), walking meditation (*kinhin*), or a material art such as *aikido*, *karate*, or *kendo*, to 'still the ordinary mind in order to access what lies beneath it, … to allow that which resides beneath the chatter of ordinary consciousness to surface in the quiet stillness of the moment' (Carter 2001, 149). This emphasis on practice and cultivation often leads to the assumption that Zen completely negates all theoretical reflection. Proclaiming that thinking in all its forms is nothing but a reality distorting set of inferences, *non-thinking* in a negative sense is referred to as both the goal and the means of spiritual enlightenment. In contrast to this approach, the Kyōto-School philosophers emphasize a different meaning of Zen practice: it does not mean refraining from thinking but rather the radical transformation of it. It is to still our ordinary mind by making our thoughts clearer. We are to develop *methodological procedures* that open up higher viewpoints, which include our previously limited knowledge in much richer and broader contexts. Usually, we think of the economy as a sum of things and events *outside* us. It seems to have to do only with markets, institutions and goods. Thus we pay no attention to our own conscious mediating operations, but exclusively to the contents that become known through these operations. This holds true both in our everyday life and economic scientific practice. Zen, on the contrary, relentlessly points us to the maxim that we should *know our own knowing*. Thus, we gain mastery of those mediating operations by which common sense and scientific meanings become known. We have to creatively 'operate on the operations', so as to gain control over, and ultimately break free from, the conceptual systems that hold us captive. Using a Zen expression, we have to *turn the light to what is directly underfoot* (Nishitani 1983, 4). This cannot be achieved by simply 'stripping off' our daily modes of knowing by escaping into a separate religious sphere – with its assumption that there is a separate religious sphere. We are not to negate our own identities

as we live and act in modern market economies, but self-consciously *appropriate* those identities. In Japanese, the term 'appropriation' (*jikaku*) literally translates as 'transformation into the self' (Nishitani 1991, 102n). Zen, according to the Kyōto school, is the fundamental method of the self-reflective thinker, the one who ceases to take for granted the seemingly unproblematic and questions the formerly unquestioned. As such, it is not only a simple criticism of anything that we know but a critical self-discovery of the conscious operations by which we know (Krebs 1977, 4-17).

How do we 'turn the light upon what is directly underfoot' in economics? I understand this as a becoming aware of the way economics shapes the various objectifications of our human experience *prior* to our understanding of them as expressions *of our* experience. This is to say that we can appropriate the ways in which 'science and scientific technique have permeated every phase of man's personal and social life' (Krebs, 24). However, our project cannot begin with accepting the definition and method of economics as we find it being taught at university courses around the world, which simply codifies a preconceived idea of human activity that includes such signifiers as the 'self', the 'market', 'self-advantage,' etc. Rather, we seek to fundamentally *transform* its methodology. Usually economics analyzes human beings as predictable and calculable objects within the framework of economic language and logic. From a Zen perspective this approach is insufficient, insofar as it does not pay attention to the observer nor to the methods he is applying. What we need is to introduce another and more fundamental level of meaningfulness: We are to gradually gain an understanding of *how* and *why* we use economic concepts by focusing on a *methodological critique* of economics' existing ways of knowing, as well as the categories and concepts that are associated with them.

It becomes obvious here that, for Zen, religion cannot possibly be an object to be controlled within the framework of rational preferences or utility maximization. It is, rather, a self-conscious activity by which we challenge and transform all ways of knowing, including the economic one. It is a process by which we learn how to transform not only the *what* of our knowledge but also the *how* of our knowing. Economists, as we have seen above, claim to be able to encompass more and new data by applying their methodological tools to ever new objects of inquiry, taken from daily life, or from various disciplines (psychology, history, sociology, etc.). Here, the conceptual system in which this extension of the economic model is justified goes unquestioned. There is no room of critically investigating or transcending its fixed horizon because this horizon never becomes a proper focus of attention. For Zen, religion frees us from this trap by showing us how to exercise our creativity along a *vertical axis*. It guides us to understand the relativity of fixed and pre-given conceptual systems, to become aware of their limitations and, eventually, to transcend those limitations. Religion thus becomes understood as a dynamic force by which we self-consciously select our existential stance and the corresponding horizon, critically transcending the limitations of the knowledge system that formerly held us captive. Moving us beyond the boundaries of a given system of knowledge, it opens up further horizons of possibilities so that gradually new ways of knowing begin to be identified and defined. As such, religion makes possible the discovery of life style possibilities and variations that are occluded by the conceptual systems prescribed by economics.

Self-Knowledge in Zen and Economics

Zen demands that the religious attitude *fundamentally questions* the basic premises of economics, in order to become the 'foundational base of science' (Nishida 1999, 244). But how can religion achieve this? By guiding us down the rigorous path of attaining *self-knowledge* in the light of Zen. As a Zen master once remarked, Zen shares with many philosophical and religious traditions the goal of 'knowing thyself' (Kasulis 1981, 1). However, it is not interested in any conceptual grasp of the self. This is to say that Zen practice shifts our focus from asking *what* the self is in any abstract manner to asking *how* we know of ourselves, thus introducing an *existential dimension* to our questioning. This opens up a new mode of reflection within the realm of economics. Since its origin as a scientific discipline in the 18th century, economics has assumed that it can proceed with models that reflect the 'true nature' of man. As its claims began to determine our social space, its image of man surely influenced what we have come to think about ourselves. However, economics has always been concerned solely with a conceptual understanding of 'economic man'. It invented various God's Eye frame of references in order to observe this theoretical creature from a distant and presumably disinterested vantage point (Brodbeck 2009). As economists we are *implicitly* trained to present ourselves as outside spectators sitting in judgment over other humans, so as to predict and advise on controlling their behavior. Because we thus make ourselves into 'nothing', treating the whole world as a fixed totality of external objects only, we expect to find answers to the question of the true nature of the self *outside* our own selves. For Zen, on the contrary, 'the self is never some kind of substantial object, something over against us that we can find' (Stambaugh 1999, 2). It is not something to be known, but the knowing activity itself. And this knowing activity 'takes place of itself before any

conscious thought' (Carter 1997, 107). The answer to the question, 'Who am I?' thus cannot be found in some reified concept outside ourselves, but only in the way we fundamentally are (Abe 2004, 67). Abe illustrates this point by retelling a story of the *Lin-chi Lu*. A very handsome young man looks into a mirror every morning, smiling at his image. One morning, he mistakenly looked at the wrong side of the mirror. Suddenly, he found that his face was not reflected in the mirror any more. In his surprise he believes his head to be lost. After desperately searching for his head, he comes to realize that his head had always been with him. What he had searched for was the very thing that *had been doing the searching*. Abe comments:

> The point of this story is that that which is sought is simply that which is seeking … Our real head … is by no means something to be sought for in front of us, but is something that always exists for each of us here and now. Being at the center of one's searching, it can never be objectified (66).

To inquire into the nature of man 'is simply the discovery of something within the self' (Nishida in: Carter 2001, 166). Strictly speaking, it is not a 'something' in the sense of an entity, but a process: the process of our own knowing. And because this process always takes place prior to what is objectively known, one of its parameters must remain unknown, which is at the same time a not-yet-known, or a yet-to-be-explored. Therefore, our quest for self-knowledge does not lead to the discovery of something, but of no-thingness, *mu*:

> We call this thing *mu* or 'nothing' because it is not something objective. It is called 'nothing' not because … our heads are missing, but because our heads are now functioning as the *living* heads. As such they are *nonobjectifiable* (Abe 2004, 66).

When economists try to grasp human nature conceptually, they are overlooking the fact that a basic experience – Nishida would call it pure experience – underlies their very act; accordingly, they cannot encompass or represent pure experience by scientific reasoning because it provides the already given background of such reasoning. They would fall, technically, into an infinite regress. Reasoning cannot at the same time create an object upon which it reasons and be that object; at no moment can reasoning be wholly made known itself to itself (Nishida 2005, 188). We can speak of such experience as a field of nothingness (jap. *mu no basho*), which 'is the given-in-intuition prior to the analysis and expression of objectification' (Carter 1997, 32).

One might, at this stage of our discussion, point out that this insight of Zen does not add much new to the (Western) philosophy of science. However, once we take a closer look, we encounter a great split between the East and the West – and thus between Zen and Economics –, in regard to the 'true nature' of this field of nothingness (Carter 2001, 152). Generally speaking, both scientists and philosophers of the West have so far maintained a *foundationalist* approach to this field. This is to say that they think of it as an 'unshakeable foundation', a substratum pre-given to all our understanding (von Mises 1949, 230). As an *a priori* it is never to be made knowable. Lying utterly 'beyond' us, we are to accept it as correctly representing an independent and unchanging reality (Taylor 1995, chapt. 1). Within economics, Ludwig von Mises has expressed this point most clearly:

> The characteristic feature of a priori knowledge is that we cannot think of the truth of its negation or of something that would be in variance with it. What the a priori expresses is necessarily implied in every proposition concerning the issue in question. It is implied in all our thinking and acting. (…) The a priori categories are the mental equipment by dint of which man is able to think and experience

> and thus acquire knowledge. Their truth or validity cannot be proved or refuted as can those of a posteriori propositions, because they are precisely the instrument that enables us to distinguish what is true from what is not (von Mises 2006, 15).

Expressed differently, within economics we perceive of the field of nothingness as *something*, albeit something which we ultimately cannot know. The meditative traditions of the East, and with them Zen, consider such foundational approaches as problematic to say the least, for they contain no basis on which to inquire into the ground or the possibility of the occurrence of the a priori itself (Nishitani 2004b, 112). The latter is simply accepted as unquestionable truth:

> Present-day science does not feel the need to concern itself with the limits of its own standpoint. … Science thus seems to regard its own scientific standpoint as a position of unquestionable truth from which it can assert itself in all directions. Hence the air of absoluteness that always accompanies scientific knowledge (Nishitani 1983, 78).

Again, I consider this not as a problem of science only, but also of our common awareness. As long as we remain stuck in conceptual reasoning, we do not allow ourselves to inquire into the place out of which all its arguments arise. As a consequence of this, our knowing activity becomes severely limited behind our back, so to speak. We implicitly assume that 'it is quite supererogatory to waste time upon controversies concerning the a priori' because 'nobody denies or could deny that no human reasoning and no human search for knowledge could dispense with what these a priori concepts, categories and propositions tell us' (von Mises 2006, 16). Thus we overlook the fact that there is something entirely *unscientific* lurking underfoot, something we ultimately only *believe* in. 'The nihility lying beneath the self is obscured' (Stambaugh 1999, 102).

Over against this, Zen emphasizes that we must go back even to the point before the world came to exist, plunging ourselves headlong into the very midst of nothingness. Using another Zen expression, we are to *become* a 'single Great Doubt,' in which not only everything known but also the givenness of the a priori of our own knowing is called into question (Stambaugh 1999, 102). In this process we question the grounds of the common, the taken for granted, turning our attention to what, from our present standpoint, we do not yet know. We are to confront ourselves with the uncomfortable and unfamiliar *within* us, even if we may have been taught to think of this as being entirely unreasonable and unintelligible.

> Where *ratio* is pushed to its true extreme, the 'irrational' shows up. Where meaning is pushed to the extreme, 'meaninglessness' shows up. And yet what thus appears as paradox, irrationality, or meaninglessness, is truly absolute reality. It is the living vitality of 'life' itself. To say here that life as such is meaningless is to say that life is truly living itself. It is, in other words, a point where life transcends all meaning, albeit a point where all meaning is able to be constituted as 'meaning' only in relationship to that point (Nishitani 1984, 180).

Science is right in proposing that we cannot know anything about the foundations of our conceptual knowledge *as long as* we remain trapped inside such knowledge. However, it goes utterly wrong when believing that, having pointed to the limit of our knowledge, we have finished with the topic of knowing. Once we push our intellect against its own limitations, retracing its steps and putting itself back to where it has not yet even started its work, a deeper form of awareness will bubble up (Suzuki 2004, 90). We will come to understand that what we formerly accepted as the pre-given and inexplicable foundations of our knowledge is in truth nothing but an incapability of thinking otherwise. It is seen through as a limitation we unconsciously created in shaping our self-concept in the past, but that we can

modify or even abandon in the moment we truly become aware of it. Thus, our self-knowledge turns from the created to the creative. It moves through a trajectory taking it from a limited perspective to a broader and more inclusive one and, as such, traverses ever deeper realms of inner awareness.

Religious Method as Conversion

So far, we have talked about becoming the great doubt in the abstract. But how is the true self of ours to emerge, and what effect will it have, in a society totally embedded in the rules and assumptions of economics, as the modern world seems to be? In this section I suggest a rudimentary for a method by which we can fruitfully explore these questions. It is important to notice that I employ the word 'method' here in a sense entirely different from its common scientific meaning. The latter usually names an orderly procedure that is established in order to carry out certain tasks in a systematic, efficient way. It means following a set of pre-given rules to solve a problem (Flanagan 1997, 262). For example, economic textbooks usually teach us how to provide solutions by learning a specific set of rules (especially mathematical ones) without explaining why such rules work. 'Method' in its religious sense, however, takes on an entirely different meaning:

> Method … refers not only to the operations required to carry out a project and the orientation that normatively directs these operations, but also to you the operator who performs the operations … The method is intended to guide you toward an ever-expanding awareness of your own knowing, choosing and loving and of how you operate in and through these operations to achieve certain goals. (Flanagan 1997, 262)[3]

[3] Flanagan here refers to 'method' as being expounded by Bernard J. F. Lonergan. See Lonergan's *Method of Theology* (1973) for more

'Method' is an exercise in realizing what we truly *are*, as well as what we *could* become as economic agents. As we will see, it is not to reject or negate any particular objectified economic expression about human beings, but to open them up, to deepen and enrich them.

Let us start with taking a look at mainstream economics, that is, positive and objective economics. In an important sense, this field of economics is characterized by a strange disengagement from our human nature. This is so because mainstream economics makes us look at things only and, thus, look away from ourselves. And 'to look away from one's self is always to see things merely as objects, that is, as "external" things outside the "internal" self' (Nishitani 1960, 29). Our knowledge is considered to be purely objective and, as such, to deal with things and relationships between things only. We perceive the economy as a second nature, existing in and for itself, completely independent of our ways of knowing it. It is governed by 'blind and ineluctable forces of nature' operating independently of human will (Mirowski 1989, 220). Thus, we come to think of our economic lives as being 'governed according to strict laws, like those of nature' (Menger 1968, VIII). They appear to be determined by *outer forces* utterly beyond our control. We could say that we are making ourselves, by the power of our conceptual grasp, into 'nothing'. Rather than thinking of ourselves as self-determining agents, we believe ourselves to be subjected to an 'invisible hand', which externally imposes mechanical patterns of behavior upon us. Borrowing a metaphor from classical economics, we are moved not by ourselves but by the will of a 'Great Mechanic', that is by God. Adam Smith expresses this by comparing ourselves to cogs in a machine:

detail. In fact, I consider Lonergan's work to be a possible starting point for comparative studies between Buddhism and Christianity. However, this topic would take us far astray from the themes of this paper.

> The wheels of the watch are all admirably adjusted to the end for which it was made, the pointing of the hour. All their various motions conspire in the nicest manner to produce this effect. If they were endowed with a desire and intention to produce it, they could not do it better. Yet we never ascribe any such desire or intention to them, but to the watchmaker, and we know that they are put into motion by a spring, which intends the effect it produces as little as they do (Smith 2000, 126).

Even though it has abandoned the idea of God, the modern objective economic worldview still considers us to be governed by outside forces beyond our control, that is, by the pure mechanisms of the market (Brodbeck 2000). As Schumpeter explains: 'Mankind is not free to choose. ... Things economic and social move by their own momentum and the ensuing situations compel individuals and groups to behave in certain ways' (Schumpeter 1976, 129). What we can do, at best, is to make such momentum work for us. Comparing the 'law of value' to the law of gravity, Léon Walras, an influential 19th century French economist, suggests:

> Any value in exchange, once established, partakes of the character of a natural phenomenon, natural in its origins, natural in its manifestations and natural in essence. (...) This does not mean that we have no control over prices. Because gravity is a natural phenomenon and obeys natural laws, it does not follow that all we can do is to watch it operate. We can either resist it or give it free rein, whichever we please, but we cannot change its essence or its laws. It is said we cannot command nature except by obeying her. This also applies to value (Walras 1969, 69).

Within such worldview, our role as active human beings is stripped away from us. If anything at all, we are no more than 'atoms' or 'molecules of the social system' (Samuelson 1972, 3).

From a Zen perspective, we are to treat such expressions seriously without falling into the trap of taking them as being com-

plete representations of ourselves. True, those expressions make us aware of an important part of our modern self-perception – that is of our impotence and powerlessness as we feel dominated by the anonymous powers of the market economy – but in and for themselves they nevertheless prove to be utterly inadequate. The question we have to face here is: Even if we were to accept the objectivity of the laws of the economy, 'on what horizon are these laws encountered and on what dimension are they received?' (Nishitani 1983, 79). Once we begin to focus on this question, we find that it cannot possibly be answered within an objective framework. The reason is this: we cannot demand that objective knowledge turns itself inside out, so that the knower becomes an object to be known itself, as this would negate the very definition of objectivity, which is that the knower has to remain disinterested in, and thus apart from, its object. Often we conclude from this logical state of affairs that it is utterly impossible to further inquire into the givenness of the laws underlying our economic existence. It is not for our human knowledge to grasp, says Adam Smith, that 'which in reality is the wisdom of God' (Smith 2000, 126). Thus, we stop our fundamental questioning before it has even started, claiming, as mainstream economics does, that we simply '*have to* research the law of social cooperation as the physicist researches the laws of mechanics' – and nothing more (von Mises 1940, 2, my emphasis). We insist on building all our knowledge upon this law while regarding all questions about its own 'truth' as ultimately unanswerable. Said differently, we simply *believe* in it in the sense of a personal conviction. Precisely at this point Zen finds science 'to be no longer scientific' (Nishitani 2004b, 116). And rather than hastily turning away from this finding, it wants us to directly look into this 'abyssal' and 'bottomless' dimension of science (Nishitani 2004b, 122). We are to penetrate to the point where 'the essence of science is questioned on the same dimension as the essence of human

existence, and in which the fundamental attitude of science itself is taken up as an existential problem' (Nishitani 2004b, 116). Expressed differently, we are to turn *inwardly* so as to open up a deeper field of awareness; a field in which we can pose the question of *how* and *why* we came to believe in the objective worldview of economics in the first place; we have to pay attention to our own subjective consciousness. One way to do so is to carefully examine the various expressions and objectifications of this consciousness as they have been formulated by subjective economic theories as they have been developed, for example, by the Austrian school of economics. As we will see, this is far from the end of the matter, because in the light of Zen we will find that we cannot possibly identify ourselves with any of these objectifications and expressions. Rather, we are to discover ourselves by transcending all categories that we use to describe particular, objectified selves:

> It is not a transcendence aimed at a self that lies somewhere beyond the boundaries of the particular self, but a 'transcending in the depths of the self' to a more profound and adequate level that both grounds the particular self and expresses itself in the particular self (Wargo 2005, 180).

Within economics, various categories have been constructed by which we are supposed to understand ourselves in terms of some form of economic common sense. Without being able to go into them in any detail here[4], I feel safe to suggest that they can all be understood as certain objectifications of an individual self, or *ego*. This is to say that once we accept them as appropriate descriptions, we come to perceive ourselves as independent and self-interested beings. We think of ourselves as being fully autonomous, capable of sustaining ourselves without the help of others (Nishitani 2004a, 17). While from an objective perspec-

[4] I have done so in: Graupe 2007, 81-95.

tive we sought the 'ultimate foundation' of our behavior outside us in the market, here we find ourselves searching for it *internally*. By means of psychological methods, for example, economists expect us to find 'that certain acts of consciousness are performed with a feeling of necessity'. Every one of us is supposed to 'hear the *voice of the law clearly speaking within him- or herself*' (Wieser 1929, 17, my emphasis). By means of introspection, we shall find a fundamental anthropological constant governing us from the depth of ourselves. For example, economics have thought of this constant to persist in either the working of our rational intellect or in our unalterable desires, preferences and the insatiable greed for more; that is in our passions, which already Hume referred to as an 'original existence' (Hume 1888, 415). Thus we come to think of ourselves as *static substances*, intellectual or emotive selves, which simply have certain properties by default, none of which are the result of any existential act (Wargo 2005, 159).

Economists usually emphasize that there is no benefit to inquiring into the ultimate principle by which our individual nature is controlled. Because they 'govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think (,) every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it' (Bentham 1970, chapt. I, sect. I). Ultimately, we can do nothing but *obey*:

> The laws of the universe about which physics, biology and praxeology (i.e. subjective economics – SG) provide knowledge are *independent of the human will*, they are *primary ontological facts rigidly restricting man's power to act*. ... With regard to the laws of the universe *any doubt of their suitableness is supererogatory and vain*. They are what they are and take care of themselves (von Mises 1949, 755-756, my emphasis).

Thus a part of our ego is turned into an 'unshakeable foundation', which is to ground all we can know both about ourselves

and the world exterior to us. While Zen would surely agree that this expresses an important characteristic of our modern obsession with individuality, it nevertheless sees through this obsession itself as an abstraction, a truncated version of our true self. This is because it fails to account for the real character of our self-consciousness, which is not something to be known or objectified but the one who is, as well, 'doing the knowing'. Zen wants us to truly know ourselves by further inquiring into the 'ultimate given' within us. We are to search into the true ground out of which all objectified self-knowledge arises, rather than simply supposing such ground to exist.

Once we really give ourselves to this task, we might find that we are incapable of expressing this ground under the sign of the individualistic methodology. We cannot grasp at any substratum upon which we could securely ground our ego. At least this is the lesson the history of economic thought could teach us if we read it critically. That history is replete with economists who have tried to pinpoint an ultimate reality within our individual consciousness as the ground of all certainty. However, invariably, another economist would query this, showing that doubting at this ontological level was indeed possible. In this sequence of assertion and falsification, the trend was for one economist or a school to insist on some vital, defining feature of the self, and its successor to show that the account was insufficient and incomplete in as much as it could not account for all we can, and in fact *do* know about ourselves. Even when taking all efforts of economics together, there is still no final answer to our fundamental quest, 'What on earth is this man who is himself, among other abilities, endowed with the capability to inquire in so scientific a way into the mechanisms of nature, the mechanisms of society, and human consciousness? To this question, the sciences are unable to provide an answer' (Nishitani 2004b, 132).

Despite of this inability, subjective economics nevertheless insists on the existence of an ultimate law in our depth, *tacitly* controlling our experience beyond our control (Friedman 1953, 40). It seems as if

> our consciousness works unconsciously and cannot give an account of why the facts arise in it and disappear again; there exists something below the barrier of our consciousness, on which it depends, but that we do not rule and that appears as extrinsic and foreign to us as does physical nature (Wieser 1929, 18).

What becomes visible here is the reductionist tendency to explain man solely in terms of a material process of the world.

> A confusion has arisen and still prevails today, in virtue of which those sciences all too often mistake man himself for a mechanism. These sciences in turn have led man to make the same mistake about himself, and in this way have played a role in dissolving the substantial form of "man", in annihilating the essence of man (Nishitani 2004b, 132).

This annihilation might, of course, give us a surprise. Hasn't our culture taught us that we are autonomous and independent human beings? However, once we truly penetrate into the depth of the self, we necessarily must come to terms with what Zen calls the *Great Doubt*, and what the school of Kyōto has proposed as the central pattern of religious thought: the thought that the self, in its very essence, is empty. We doubt, here, not only the existence of some ultimate law governing our economic lives from without (in which we follow the path of certain unorthodox economists before), but also that such law could possibly rule us from within (which, beyond the purview of most economists, translates us into the realm of religion). This is because we simply cannot point to any substance upon

which it can be grounded – neither in our intellect, nor in our emotions, nor in our will.

> In nihility both things and the subject return to their respective essential modes of being, to their very own home-ground where they are what they originally are. But at the same time, their 'existence' itself then turns into a single great question mark. It becomes something of which we know neither whence it comes nor whither it goes, something essentially incomprehensible und unnameable. Each and every thing, no matter how well acquainted the self may be with it, remains at bottom, in its essential mode of being, an unknown. Even should the self itself, as subject, seek to return to its home-ground, to its very existence as such, it becomes something nameless and hard to pin down. This is what I meant when, speaking of the Great Doubt, I said that the self becomes a realization of doubt (Nishitani 1983, 111).

Of course, in our daily life we hastily attempt to turn away from such fundamental doubt. Also, the mainstream of economics has refrained from further inquiry into this, which seems to stand outside the boundaries of the paradigm both of preferences and of mechanical models. In both cases, we simply keep on *believing* that 'the I is the unity of the acting person. It is given without question and cannot be dissolved through any thought' (von Mises 1940, 34). We insist that our quest for self-knowledge *must* conclude on the subjective levels (White 1984, chapt. 6).

For Zen, however, the Great Doubt is not the end but the *starting point* for discovering our true self, that is the 'non-ego' or 'formless self'. Yet, we have to carefully note what Zen wants us to detect here. Many intellectual traditions have blamed economics for giving us a *false* account of human nature. Thus they have attempted to find new and better explanations that could be substituted for 'economic man'. In contrast to this, Zen does not propose some account of human nature with which we

could replace *homo oeconomicus;* but instead, Zen proposes the project of penetrating into its very depth. We are to plunge ourselves headlong into the Great Doubt, so as to self-consciously *become* economic man and existentially converse with it:

> The non-man-centered nature of Buddhism … do(es) not imply, as is often mistakenly suggested, any denial of the significance of individualized human existence. In fact, it is precisely the other way round: the very act of transcending man-centeredness is possible only to a human being who is fully self-conscious (Abe 2004, 150).

Metaphorically speaking, to encounter the *Great Doubt* is like 'the brandishing of a religious sword of death and a demand to annihilate one's self' (Nishitani 2004b, 120). While this might sound utterly nihilistic and pessimistic, actually the reverse is the case: 'the sword that kills is here at the same time a sword that gives life' (Nishitani 2004b, 120). This is to say that our quest, which takes shape immanent to economic man, is what allows us to suddenly break through the limitations of the self assumptions under which our awareness formerly operated. From below or beneath our individual ego there will arise a deeper form of reality, 'wherein the self *is* in itself at the point that it has stepped over itself' (Nishitani 1983, 68). We will 'drop' our ego so that it gives way to a 'self-expressive, creative subject'; a subject that 'knows itself' clearly and distinctly"' (Hisamatsu in: Stambaugh 1999, 156).

Outlook

Let me, at this point of our discussion, suggest that for Zen to develop into a true stronghold of free thinking in our time, it will have to put itself to the task of bearing yet clearer witness to that 'deeper reality' we just encountered. We are in 'need for a more elemental mode of reflection' (Nishitani 1983, 69). Cer-

tainly, this need confronts us with a demanding task. Herewith, I propose a preliminary sketch of a path forward along which Zen might guide us in what seems like the most secular region of the life world: that dealing with production and commerce. I will limit myself to making four points.

Firstly, we should, in the light of Zen, inquire more deeply into the economic meaning of the 'unconscious'. As we have seen, economists have thought of the unconscious as something extrinsic and foreign to us. It is 'seen as "other" - alien, unknowable, even threatening' (Stambaugh 1999, 96). In contrast to this, Zen agrees with some innovative schools of psychology and psychiatry that 'there is not such thing as The Unconscious; there are quite simply facets of awareness that go *unnoticed*. These facets are not hidden in some receptacle that is in principle unavailable to us. If we can defocus our selective attention, they are available' (Stambaugh 1999, 93). Thus, Zen does not treat the unconscious as a problem beyond our understanding, but as a provisional parameter of the awareness we bring to bear on our egotistic consciousness. Being provisional, it can be overcome by further deepening and broadening our awareness.

Secondly, in order for such deepening or broadening to occur, we should carefully note that some economists have further inquired into the true *a priori* of our individual consciousness, despite their insistence on human beings' general incapability of doing so. Although their position has generally led to a retreat from this area of focus, we can use their work to find in the unconscious both an *a posteriori* 'personal unconscious' and an *a priori* 'impersonal conscious'. The true *a priori* for economics does not seem to lie within each of us individually but within a '*collective unconscious*'. The 'voice of the law' that we think of as clearly speaking from within ourselves *tacitly* arises out of a field of common experience. It speaks to everyone in the same voice. Beyond both our objective grasp of the world

and the subjective grasp of ourselves lies 'the fund of experiences that are the common possession of all who practice economy. There are experiences that every theorist finds within himself without having to resort to special scientific procedures' (Wieser in: von Mises 2006, 78). The expressions by which we have to come to think of ourselves and the world around us are what they are, 'because they are the terms in which others think and the terms in which all of us act. This correspondence is grasped intuitively or introspectively' (von Mises 2006, chapt. 1.7). Expressed differently, we are always *in* ordinary, everyday experience, commonly living and acting together in modern market societies, *prior* to our minds beginning their dissecting business. Only out of our living experiences *within* the sociocultural context of market economies do we continually form our truncated and abstract understandings *about* these experiences. Metaphorically speaking we could say:

> Just as a fist can only form out of the neutral basis of an open hand, the grasping of ego can only assert itself out of non-ego, out of nongrasping awareness. Without this neutral nongrasping ground to arise from and return to, ego's activity could not occur. This neutral ground is what is known in Buddhism as *egolessness*, open nondual awareness, the *ground* against which the *figure* of ego's grasping stands out (Welwood and Wilber in: Stambaugh 1999, 93).

Thirdly, Zen will have to find ways of expressing the 'true reality' of such nongrasping awareness without assuming it to be a substratum in and for itself. This, at least, is the trap in which, apparently, many scientists have fallen, who have explicitly thought that this world lies entirely 'beyond' our egos (Graupe 2006, 78-99). Thus, evolutionary economists such as Hayek have considered our individuality as being unconsciously shaped against the background of *given* market institutions. We appear to be dominated by unconscious action and blind adher-

ence to the social institutions of competitive markets that work from deeply within us. There is, says Hayek,

> the necessity (...) *of the individual submitting itself to the anonymous and seemingly irrational forces of society* – a submission which must include not only the acceptance of rules of behavior as valid without examining what depends in the particular instance on their being observed but also a readiness to adjust himself to changes which may profoundly affect his fortunes and opportunities and the causes of which may be altogether unintelligible to him (Hayek 1980, 24, my emphasis).

Insofar as Zen philosophers speak about 'the surrender of intellect to something greater and stronger than the self' (Abe 2004, 94), we have to be careful not to misunderstand them to be talking about conformism, however it is presented. This is to say that we are to point out that Zen ultimately rejects the *whole* idea of a substance, of an unchanging substratum underlying all our experience. For the Kyōto School philosophers, an account of the 'world of history' such as Hayek's is nothing more but a *denial* 'of our personal Self, from the depth of ourselves'. It penetrates us demonically and deceives us under the mask of truth (Nishida 1958, 223). This is because it does not allow for any 'formation' or 'creation'. There is no movement 'from the formed toward the forming' (176).

In order to make this point at least somewhat clearer, let me, fourthly and finally, refer to what I consider the most fundamental difference in the methodological procedures of Zen and economics. Explicitly or implicitly, economics so far has taken it to be entirely impossible 'to think of change without implying the concept of substratum that, while it changes, remains in some regard and sense constant in the succession of various states'. And it has concluded from this that for our theory of human knowledge 'there is certainly something that it cannot help considering as permanent' (von Mises 2006, 1). Thus, it

makes us, both in theory and practice, to think of ourselves as being ultimately controlled by some forces over which we do not have power in turn. Because what lies underfoot appears as already created by the past, we conceive of the present as if it were already been decided upon. It is precisely this standpoint that Zen wants us to existentially controvert in *all* its facets. 'Dare we conceive of a mode of being that is neither subjective nor substantial? However difficult it may be to think in such terms, we must' (Nishitani 1983, 112). Once we stop to conceptually think of the world upon the basis of something given, we are free to *act within* it so as to become creative parts of the creative, self-determining world (Nishida 1958, 230). The *emptiness* Zen talks about is, in a final account, not something to look at. We are to plunge ourselves right into it. We are to change from observers to movers, from victims to creators, so as to become both *creatus* and *creatans* (Carter 2001, 46).

> Instead of staying in the world and looking back at its beginning, we must leap back at once and spot where *atman* stood when the world had not yet been created. That is, we must go back even to the point the world came to exist, and plunge ourselves into the very midst of nothingness (Suzuki 2004, 86).

Zen does not stop short at the point of view that our lives have been determined by the historical formation of market institutions once and for all. The true *formless self* of Zen 'realizes itself in wondrous, free activity, but does not remain confined to history. It is free to go in and out of history, now actualising itself, now retreating to the root-source' (Stambaugh 1999, 142). Our selves are determined, this is true, but it is ourselves, together with all sentient beings, who are doing the determining. Thus we find the foundationalist approach of economics, in all its variations, to be in error *as such*. This approach is, in a final account, nothing but an illusion, a truncated abstraction of

the nonobjectifiable and dynamic world we continually create while we are created by it. However, from a Zen perspective we will not be able to 'convert' other people to this point of view, nor can we argue them into changing their foundationalist assumptions. We can only *invite* them to join us in our quest for self-knowledge.

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Part III

Aspects of Buddhist Philosophy

Rational Argumentation in Early Buddhism

Guang Xing

Abstract

In this article I will put forward several arguments to show that Buddhism, and especially Early Buddhism, has a rational approach as its basis. My arguments will be backed up by relevant passages from the Pāli scriptures, citing the Buddha's words. In particular I will argue that the teachings of Early Buddhism are founded on the Buddha's own experience, and that the Buddha is a teacher who has directly known and seen the Dhamma [Sanskrit: *Dharma*] himself. It is recommended to investigate a teacher personally before placing one's trust and confidence in him. In general, one should find out the truth oneself and then unravel what is false and what is true, as knowledge is better than faith.

Faith is only considered useful in the first step, but the aim is to raise wisdom in order to dispel ignorance, the root cause of suffering. There is even an utterly rational approach to concepts like *nirvāṇa* or karma [Pāli: *nibbāna*, *kamma*].

Introduction

Buddhism is considered to be rational for various reasons, for example by some early scholars such as Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya and Nathmal Tatia because the Buddha based his teaching on strong grounds of reason and by other scholars such as Louis de La Vallée-Poussin because it was non-mystical, while still others consider Buddhism to be rational since it is

non-metaphysical.[1] In fact, Buddhism, particularly Early Buddhism, is rational indeed because its teachings are entirely based on the Buddha's enlightenment, or, in other words, on his own experience, but neither on revelation nor on the teacher's omniscience. Therefore, Early Buddhism is both non-mystical and non-metaphysical and even the concept of *nirvāṇa* is explained as the cessation of suffering, nothing beyond that. Reason is considered to be useful only for organizing knowledge but not as a means of obtaining knowledge. This is clearly stated in the *Sangārava Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. When a Brahmin student asked the Buddha what kind of teacher he was, he said:

> 1) There are some recluses and brahmins who are traditionalists, who on the basis of oral tradition claim [to teach] the fundamentals of the holy life after having reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now; such are the brahmins of the Three Vedas. 2) There are some recluses and brahmins who, entirely on the basis of mere faith, claim [to teach] the fundamentals of the holy life after having reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge; such are the reasoners and investigators. 3) There are some recluses and Brahmins who, having directly known the Dhamma for themselves among things not heard before, claim [to teach] the fundamentals of the holy life after having reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge.[2]

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[1] See Jayatilleke 2004, 402 with fn. 1, where Jayatilleke refers to authors and sources as follows: Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *The Way to Nirvana: Six Lectures on Ancient Buddhism as a Discipline of Salvation*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1917, 30 ff.; Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya, *The Basic Conception of Buddhism*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1934, 9 ff.; Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1941, Vol. 1, 359; Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923, 14; Nathmal Tatia, *Studies in Jaina Philosophy*. Varanasi: P.V. Research Institute, 1951, 7; J.G. Jennings (ed., trans.), *The Vedantic Buddhism of the Buddha: A Collection of Historical Texts*. London: Oxford University Press, 1947, xxiv.

After having said this, the Buddha told the Brahmin student that he was a teacher of the third group. In other words, the Buddha is a teacher who has directly known, seen and experienced the Dhamma himself and so distinguishes himself from the other two groups of teachers. The first group of teachers were the traditionalists who based their teachings on revelation, so they relied on faith in the Supreme Being for knowledge, while the second group of teachers were the reasoners and investigators who based their teachings on logic and inference for knowledge.

Although reasoning and logic or inference are also used in Early Buddhism, they are used for organizing knowledge and presenting ideas, but not as a means of gaining knowledge. Therefore the well-known *Kālāma Sutta* lists ten ways of knowing as unsatisfactory which include these two ways. They are as follows:

> So in this case, Kālāmas, 1) don't go by reports, 2) by hearsay, 3) by traditions, 4) by scripture (the authority of religious texts), 5) by logical conjecture, 6) by inference, 7) by considering reasons, 8) by agreement through pondering views, 9) by probability, or 10) by the thought, 'This contemplative is our teacher.'[3]

These means of knowing are not considered to be totally wrong, but unsatisfactory because they may lead one to truth as well as to falseness.

So in this chapter we will discuss rational thinking in Early Buddhism by relying on the Pāli Nikāyas and the Chinese Āga-

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[2] Ñāṇamoli / Bodhi (trans.) 1995, 820 (= MN 100, PTS II 211). The numbers have been added by me.

[3] AN 3.65 [Thai: 3.66], PTS I 188. The rendering is based on Thanissaro Bhikkhu's translation of the *Kālāma Sutta* (Thanissaro 1994/2010) with changes referring to translations of the sutta from Woodward (trans.) 2000, 171; Rahula 1974, 2-3 and Soma Thera's web version (Soma 1994/2010).

mas, which are generally considered by scholars to be the earliest Buddhist literature. Also the term 'Early Buddhism' is applied here in the sense as reflected by Buddhism in these early scriptures. So I will make use of these materials as my primary sources of information for investigation although I may occasionally use other sources but only as supporting evidence.

The Role of Faith in Early Buddhism

Although Buddhism also speaks of faith, faith only plays a subordinate role and wisdom is the sole object to obtain in order to dispel ignorance, the ultimate cause for suffering. Therefore, faith is neither mentioned in the fundamental teachings of Buddhism such as the noble eightfold path, nor in the threefold path: precept, concentration and wisdom, and not even among the seven factors of enlightenment: mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy or rapture, relaxation or tranquillity, concentration, equanimity. Instead, investigation is there. Accordingly, in order to dispel ignorance one has to understand, and in order to understand one has to investigate. This is why Buddhism encourages free thinking which is the spirit of the *Kālāma Sutta*. So Jayatilleke says that faith is only considered a first step towards understanding the Buddha's teaching.[4] Faith in Early Buddhism means rational faith because it is established only after an investigation of the teacher to follow, since pure faith may lead to truth but it may equally lead to falseness. In the *Cankī Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha states this clearly:

> There are five things (…) that may turn out in two different ways here and now. What five? Faith, approval, oral tradition, reasoned cognition, and reflective acceptance of a view. These five things may

[4] Jayatilleke 2004, 396. The *Bhaddāli Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* (MN 65, PTS I 444) states this clearly.

turn out in two different ways here and now. Now, something may be fully accepted out of faith, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false; but something else may not be fully accepted out of faith, it may be factual, true, and unmistaken.[5]

As such, Early Buddhism encourages people to investigate the Buddha so that ultimate faith is placed in him. The *Vīmaṃsaka Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* states that a disciple should investigate the Buddha in order to gain confidence in him,[6] which he should do through his own eyes and ears in the following ways: whether the Buddha (1) has defiled states, or (2) mixed states, or (3) wholesome states of mind cognized by the eyes and ears; if he has acquired the wholesome states of mind, whether he has acquired it (4) for a long time or for a short and temporary period, or (5) for fame and profit, or (6) whether he is restrained by or without fear. So this is a sixfold step recommended by the Buddha to investigate the teacher in whom you will place your trust and confidence. The Sutta does not stop here, but asks the disciple to investigate further whether these are just reports or seen and heard by a disciple himself personally from the Buddha. It is only after such a thorough investigation and after the disciple has seen and heard it through direct knowledge that the disciple places confidence in the Teacher. So such a kind of faith, supported by reason and rooted in vision, is firm and called rational faith. When the Brahmin householders of Sālā village came to see the Buddha, the latter just enquired whether they had found a teacher agreeable to them in whom they had acquired faith supported by reasons.[7] So this is true not only for monks but for lay people as well.

This kind of rational attitude of mind is also discussed in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* when the Buddha advises his disciples that they should neither be angry and upset nor jubilant and joyful

[5] Ñāṇamoli / Bodhi (trans.) 1995, 780 (= MN 95, PTS II 170).
[6] MN 47, PTS I 317-320; Ñāṇamoli / Bodhi (trans.) 1995, 415-418.
[7] MN 60: *Apaṇṇaka Sutta*, PTS I 401.

when others either criticize or praise the Buddha, the Dhamma or the Saṅgha respectively. But they should investigate and find out the truth and then unravel what is false and what is true. The Buddha said: 'For if you were to become angry or upset in such a situation, you would only be creating an obstacle for yourselves. If you were to become angry or upset when others speak in dispraise of us, would you be able to recognize whether their statements are rightly or wrongly spoken?'[8] So a rational attitude of mind is healthy for the development of oneself and others.

Buddhism encourages rational faith supported by reason and rooted in vision because faith sometimes may lead to affection, attachment and even to hatred. Therefore Vakkali, who had a strong faith as reported in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*,[9] expressed his wish to see the Buddha in person when he was in terminal illness. On this occasion the Buddha uttered the well-known statement: 'Enough, Vakkali, why do you want to see this foul body? One who sees the Dhamma sees me; one who sees me sees the Dhamma. For in seeing the Dhamma, Vakkali, one sees me; and in seeing me, one sees the Dhamma.'[10] The Dhamma here implies the teaching, the truth, the reality of phenomena. So in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* it is said that there are five drawbacks when one has an attachment to another person,[11] and eventually even hatred may arise out of affection for a person.[12] Therefore, although starting with faith, one has to transcend faith and see truth by oneself because, as discussed above, faith may turn out to be true or false. It is only when one sees it with one's own eyes and knows it personally that one can find out what truth is.

[8] Bodhi (trans.) 2007, 55-56 (= DN 1, PTS I 2-3).
[9] In the *Etadaggavagga* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (AN 1.24, PTS I 24), Vakkali is said to be the highest of those who had faith.
[10] Bodhi (trans.) 2000, 939 (= SN 22.87: *Vakkali Sutta*, PTS III 120).
[11] AN 5.250, PTS III 270.
[12] AN 4.200, PTS II 213.

Buddhism always stresses that knowledge is better than faith. The *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* states this explicitly. Here I just reproduce the dialogues between Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta and Citta, the Buddha's lay disciple according to Jayatilleke who has beautifully summarized it.[13]

> *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta*: Do you believe in the statement of the recluse Gotama that there is a jhānic state in which there is no discursive or reflective thought and there is a cessation of discursive thought and reflection?
>
> *Citta*: I do not accept this as a belief.
>
> *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta*: See what an honest, straightforward and upright person the householder Citta is ….
>
> *Citta*: What do you think? Which is better – knowledge or belief?
>
> *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta*: Surely, knowledge is better than belief.
>
> *Citta*: (I can attain up to the fourth jhāna) … … Knowing and seeing thus, why should I accept this on the grounds of faith in any recluse or Brahmin, that there is a trance in which there is no discursive or reflective thought … .

So what is emphasized here is knowing and seeing, not believing. Rahula puts it aptly: 'The expressions used everywhere in Buddhist texts referring to persons who realized truth are: "The dustless and stainless eye of truth (…) has arisen." "He has seen truth, has attained truth, has known truth, has penetrated into truth, has crossed over doubt, is without wavering." "Thus with right wisdom he sees it as it is (…)." With reference to his own enlightenment the Buddha said: "The eye was born, knowledge was born, wisdom was born, science was born, light was born." It is always seeing through knowledge or wisdom (…), and not believing through faith.'[14]

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[13] Jayatilleke 2004, 398 (cf. SN 41.8, PTS IV 297-300).

[14] Rahula 1974, 9.

The Omniscience of the Buddha

Many people misunderstand the Buddhist concept of omniscience thinking that the Buddha must claim to know everything in the physical world. The ascetic Vacchagotta approaches the Buddha and enquires about precisely the scope of the Buddha's knowledge as reported in the *Tevijjavacchagotta Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

> Venerable sir, I have heard this: 'The recluse Gotama claims to be omniscient [*sabbaññu*] and all-seeing [*sabbadassāvī*], to have complete knowledge and vision thus: "Whether I am walking or standing or sleeping or awake, knowledge and vision are continuously and uninterruptedly present to me."' Venerable sir, do those who speak thus say what has been said by the Blessed One, and not misrepresent him with what is contrary to fact?[15]

Then the Buddha categorically says: 'Vaccha, those who say thus do not say what has been said by me, but misrepresent me with what is untrue and contrary to fact.'[16] A similar claim is also found in the *Kaṇṇakatthala Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, where the Buddha says: 'There is no recluse or brahmin who knows all, who sees all, simultaneously; that is not possible', when King Pasenadi enquires about him.[17] This statement also includes the Buddha himself. So here it is quite clear that the

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[15] Ñāṇamoli / Bodhi (trans.) 1995, 587 (= MN 71, PTS I 482). It seems that this kind of omniscience was claimed by other ascetic teachers of the Buddha's time such as the leader of the Jainas. The *Cūḷadukkhakkhandha Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* reports that Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta claimed omniscience and all-seeing and complete knowledge thus: 'Whether I am walking or standing or asleep or awake, knowledge and vision are continuously and uninterruptedly present in me.' (trans. Ñāṇamoli / Bodhi 1995, 187-188 = MN 14, PTS I 92-93).

[16] Ñāṇamoli / Bodhi (trans.) 1995, 587-588. (= MN 71, PTS I 482).

[17] Ñāṇamoli / Bodhi (trans.) 1995, 735 (= MN 90, PTS II 127).

Buddha has never claimed to have such kind of omniscience regarding the physical world.

The Buddhist term for omniscience is know-all (*sabbaññu*), which means that the Buddha knows all about the world of experience. The Buddha in fact never claims to know the physical world in its entirety. According to the *Kāḷakārāma Sutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha says:

> Monks, whatever in the world with its gods, Māras and Brahmas, among the progeny consisting of recluses and Brahmins, gods and men – whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after and pondered over by the mind – all that do I know. Monks, whatever in the world … … by the mind – that I have fully understood; all that is known to the Tathāgata, but the Tathāgata has not taken his stand upon it.[18]

The same passage with the same idea is also found in the *Loka Sutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and the *Itivuttaka* and also in the Chinese translation of the *Madhyama Āgama*.[19] So what is 'all' in the word 'knowing-all'? The *Sabba Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* informs us that 'The eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odours, the tongue and tastes, the body and tactile objects and the mind and mental phenomena. This is called the all'.[20] The Buddha declares that 'without directly knowing and fully understanding the all, without developing dispassion towards it and abandoning it, one is incapable of destroying suffering'.[21] A detailed description of it is found in the *Paṭhamā-parijānana Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* as follows:

[18] Nanananda (trans.) 1997, 8 (= AN 4.24, PTS II 25).
[19] AN 4.23, PTS II 23; It 112; CBETA, T01, no. 26, p. 645, b9-c13.
[20] Bodhi (trans.) 2000, 1140 (= SN 35.23, PTS IV 15).
[21] Bodhi (trans.) 2000, 1141 (= SN 35.26, PTS IV 17).

> Without directly knowing and fully understanding the eye, without developing dispassion towards it and abandoning it, one is incapable of destroying suffering.
> Without directly knowing and fully understanding forms … eye-consciousness … eye-contact … and whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition … without developing dispassion towards it and abandoning it, one is incapable of destroying suffering.
> Without directly knowing and fully understanding the ear … the mind … and whatever feeling arises with mind-contact as condition … without developing dispassion towards it and abandoning it, one is incapable of destroying suffering.
> This, bhikkhus, is the all without directly knowing and fully understanding which … one is incapable of destroying suffering.[22]

So it is clear that the Buddha declares that he knows all about our world of experience and that without knowing this he would not be released from suffering. Hence, knowing-all and seeing-all mean that the Buddha has known and seen into the real nature of experience and phenomena, and it is because of this that the Buddha is called the Tathāgata. So the *Loka Sutta* says, 'From the night he fully awakened, monks, until the night he attains final Nibbāna, in this interval, whatever he speaks, talks of, and expounds, all that is just so, not otherwise; therefore is he called Tathāgata.'[23]

Here we can see that what the Buddha claims to know thoroughly is the world of experience which we ordinary people attach to and desire for. So it is nothing irrational.

The Concept of *nirvāṇa*

Some people misunderstand the Buddhist concept of *nirvāṇa* and interpret it as some kind of transcendental experience, while others interpret it as a kind of annihilation. As for the lat-

[22] Bodhi (trans.) 2000, 1141-1142 (= SN 35.26, PTS IV 17).
[23] Bodhi (trans.) 2005, 421 (= AN 4.23, PTS II 23).

ter, the Buddha himself already rejected it as misrepresenting him. The *Alagaddūpama Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* states clearly that the Buddha says:

> As I am not, as I do not proclaim, so I have been baselessly vainly, falsely, and wrongly misrepresented by some recluses and Brahmins thus: 'The recluse Gotama is one who leads astray; he teaches the annihilation, the destruction, the extermination, of an existing being.' Bhikkhus, both formerly and now what I teach is suffering and the cessation of suffering.[24]

Thus the charge of annihilation is not appropriate. Just as Professor Karunadasa says, 'What is extinguished, what is annihilated when Nibbāna is won is suffering. It is not the extinction of life, nor the annihilation of the individual. Nor is it the annihilation of an independently existing self-entity, for Buddhism does not recognize such an entity either to be annihilated or perpetuated in eternity. What is brought to an end is not a self-entity but the false belief in such an entity, i.e., the ego illusion and all that it entails and implies.'[25]

So here it is clear that the Buddha himself rejected the accusation of his preaching a doctrine of annihilation. Then what about the transcendental interpretation of the concept of *nirvāṇa*? Professor Karunadasa has written an excellence paper on this issue: 'Nibbanic Experience: A Non-Transcendental Interpretation'.[26] I will summarise his argument as follows:

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[24] Ñāṇamoli / Bodhi (trans.) 1995, 234 (= MN 22, PTS I 140). Its counterpart is found in the Chinese translation of the *Madhyama Āgama*, Sūtra No. 200 and the *Ekottara Āgama*, Sūtra No. 43.5. The well-known statement is also found in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 22.86 (= PTS III 119; trans. Bodhi 2000, 938). This idea is also found in other places in the canon such as the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* 12.15 (= PTS II 17; trans. Bodhi 2000, 544).

[25] Karunadasa 1994, 55.

[26] Karunadasa 1994.

In the Buddhist scriptures, the nibbanic experience is described as accompanied by a higher knowledge, or the realization of Nibbāna is itself defined as the attainment of knowledge. This knowledge in Nibbanic experience is described by a number of terms: *paññā* (wisdom), *pariññā* (accurate or exact knowledge), *aññā* (gnosis), *abhiññā* (higher knowledge) and *vipassanā* (insight).[27] 'Is it the knowledge of metaphysical reality or is it a true vision into the nature of the phenomenal reality?' Professor Karunadasa says, 'The answer to this question is provided by the definition of knowledge as *yathābhūta-ñāṇa*,[28] i.e. knowledge of things as they truly are.'[29] This is referred to in section three above as the all, which is the phenomena, the totality of our experience.

Some people may argue that the concept of *nirvāṇa* is described in the canonical passages as transcending the world; so they come to the conclusion that *nirvāṇa* is transcendental. Here we must understand the Buddhist concept of world to be transcended. The *Lokantagamana Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* says, 'That in the world by which one is the perceiver of the world, a conceiver of the world – this is called the world in the Noble One's discipline.'[30] The *Lokāyatika Sutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* says, 'Brāhmans, these five strands of sense-desire are called the world in the code of the Ariyan. What five? Shapes, cognized by the eye, longed for, alluring, pleasurable, lovely, bound up with passion and desire; sounds, cognized by the ear, smells by the nose, tastes by the tongue, contacts, cognized by the touch, longed for, alluring, pleasurable, lovely, bound up with passion and desire.'[31] So the world the Buddhists wish to transcend is not the objective world, but a psychological

[27] See e.g. MN 2, PTS I 10; SN 22.22, PTS III 26; DN 33, PTS III 230.
[28] SN 47.4, PTS V 144; *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, PTS II 63.
[29] Personal communication from Prof. Karunadasa.
[30] Bodhi (trans.) 2000, 1190 (= SN 35.116, PTS IV 95). The counterpart of this sutta is also found in the Chinese translation of the *Saṃyukta Āgama* (CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 56, c12-p. 57, a15).

one which is perceived and experienced by our senses. Professor Karunadasa says, 'This does not mean that the objective existence of the world is rejected. It is only for practical purposes, to be more precise, in the interests of soteriology that the term world is given a psychological interpretation.'[32] So it is said in the *Samiddhilokapañhā Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*,

> Where there is eye, Samiddhi, where there is form, eye-consciousness, things to be recognized by the eye-consciousness, there the world exists or the description of the world.
>
> … …
>
> Where there is no ear … no mind, no mental phenomena, no mind-consciousness, no things to be recognized by the mind-consciousness, there the world does not exist nor any description of the world.[33]

Therefore the Buddha says, 'It is, friend, in just this fathom long body endowed with apperception and mind that I make known the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world and the path leading to cessation of the world.'[34] So the attainment of Nibbāna is described as 'the destruction of lust, the

[31] Hare (trans.), PTS IV 289 (= AN 9.38, PTS IV 428). A similar passage is also found in the *Palokadhamma Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (SN 35.84, PTS IV 53) as follows: 'Whatever is subject to disintegration, Ānanda, is called the world in the Noble One's Discipline. And what is subject to disintegration? The eye, Ānanda, is subject to disintegration, forms … eye-consciousness … eye-contact … whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition … that too is subject to disintegration. The ear is subject to disintegration … The mind is subject to disintegration … Whatever feeling arises with mind-contact as condition … that too is subject to disintegration. Whatever is subject to disintegration, Ānanda, is called the world in the Noble One's Discipline.' (trans. Bodhi, 2000, 1163).

[32] Karunadasa 1994, 58.

[33] Bodhi (trans.) 2000, 1153 (= SN 35.68, PTS IV 39-40).

[34] Bodhi (trans.) 2000, 157 (= SN 2.26: *Rohitassa Sutta*, PTS I 62).

destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion'.[35] 'The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering is this: It is the complete cessation of that very craving, giving it up, relinquishing it, liberating oneself from it, and detaching oneself from it.'[36] So the attainment of Nibbāna is not transcendence of the physical world but of the world of experience.

Some people may ask, 'What about the Buddha when he attains the final *nirvāṇa*?' This question has been asked so many times and the Buddha himself has given a good answer. The attainment of the final *nirvāṇa* is compared to a fire gone out so that one cannot enquire to which direction the fire has gone.[37]

> So too, Vaccha, the Tathāgata has abandoned that material form by which one describing the Tathāgata might describe him; he has cut it off at the root, made it like a palm-stump, done away with it so that it is no longer subject to future arising. The Tathāgata is liberated from reckoning in terms of material form, Vaccha, he is profound, immeasurable, hard to fathom like the ocean.[38]

Therefore, to try to locate the Tathāgata in a post-mortem position is like trying to locate an extinguished fire. In both cases the questions are equally meaningless and equally unwarranted. So a transcendental interpretation of the concept of *nirvāṇa* cannot find support in canonical literature. This is because the Buddha is interested only in the solution to the problem of

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[35] Bodhi (trans.) 2000, 1294 (= SN 38.1, PTS IV 251). The same is also found in the Chinese translation of the *Ekottara Āgama*, CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 126, b2-7.

[36] Bodhi (trans., 2000), 1844 (= SN 56.11, PTS V 421). The same is also found in the Chinese translation of the *Ekottara Āgama*, CBETA, T02, no. 125, p. 619, a15-17, as well as in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (SN 2.29, PTS I 64); the Chinese translation of the *Saṃyukta Āgama*, CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 264, b4-17; CBETA, T02, no. 100, p. 459, b20-c3.

[37] MN 72: *Aggivacchagotta Sutta*, PTS I 487-488.

[38] Ñāṇamoli / Bodhi (trans.) 1995, 593 (= MN 72, PTS I 487-488).

suffering. This is supported by the well known saying: just as the great ocean has but one taste, the taste of salt, even so this doctrine and discipline has but one taste, the taste of deliverance.[39] After enlightenment, the Buddha told his disciples, 'Walk, monks, on tour for the blessing of the many folk, for the happiness of many folk out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the blessing, the happiness of devas and men. Let not two (of you) go by one way.'[40]

The Concept of Karma and Rebirth

Some people may argue that the concept of karma [Pāli: *kamma*] and rebirth is not rational since they cannot be completely verified. Those who say so miss the point in Buddhist ethics. The emphasis of the Buddhist concept of karma and rebirth is on human behaviour guided and led by mind rather than metaphysics or ritual performance. Just as the Buddha said, 'Monks, I declare that volition or intention is *kamma*. Having intended one performs action by body, speech and mind.'[41]

As Howard Parsons says, 'Gautama breaks with his predecessors in interpreting what they took to be a blind and inevitable karma as a structure of human habit and hence a problem for the human will. He understood the concept of karma as a

[39] Hare (trans.), PTS IV 139 (= AN 8.19, PTS IV 203). This idea is also found in many other places in the canon such as the *Vinaya* (Cv IX, 1, 4, PTS II 239), the *Udāna* (5.5, PTS 56), the Chinese translation of the *Ekottara Āgama* 42.4 (CBETA, T02, no. 125, p. 753, a28-b1); the Chinese translation of the *Madhyama Āgama*, Sūtra No. 35 (CBETA, T01, no. 26, p. 476, c10-15).
[40] Horner (trans.), PTS IV 28 (= Vin I 21, Mv I, 11, 1). The same idea is also found in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (SN 4.5, PTS I 105-106; trans. Bodhi 2000, 198); the Chinese translation of the *Saṃyukta Āgama*, CBETA, T02, no. 99, p. 288, a29-b18.
[41] AN 6.63, PTS III 415.

moral and interpreted it as the universal order of justice. As conditioned genesis, karma can be discerned, understood, and controlled.'[42]

So what is emphasized in the Buddhist concept of karma is intention functioning as the motive force that determines quality and thus the karmic effects which are manifested through verbal and bodily actions. The *Dhammapada* says that the mind governs all of our behaviour and whatever we experience, either happiness or suffering, will follow our mind, just like the shadow which never leaves.[43]

Some people may think that the concept of karma in Buddhism is so rigid that in whatever way a person creates karma, that is how it is experienced. According to the *Lonaphala Sutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, this is not a correct understanding.[44] In the same sutta the Buddha explains that a trifling evil deed done by an individual may take him to hell if he is undeveloped in bodily conduct, undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind, undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. But a similar trifling evil deed done by another individual may be experienced here and now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment only. This is because the individual is developed in bodily conduct, developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the immeasurable. This rational explanation of the complicated concept of karma is similar to the modern day law that the repeated offender is punished

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[42] Parsons 1951, 9.

[43] Dhp, verses No. 1-2. The same idea is also found in the *Ummagga Sutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (AN 4.186, PTS II 177; trans. Woodward, PTS II 185): 'The world is led by mind. By mind it is drawn along. When mind has arisen, it goes under its sway.' It is also found in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (SN 1.62, PTS I 39; trans. Bodhi 2000, 130), and in the Chinese translation of the *Saṃyukta Āgama*, Sūtra No.1009.

[44] AN 3.101, PTS I 249-250.

heavily while an occasional offender with good character is punished lightly.

Even if one does not believe in rebirth or the other world, the concept of karma is still meaningful. The Chinese version of the *Kālāma Sūtra* states that the Kālāmas are perplexed with regard to precisely karma and rebirth; so the Buddha advises them to observe the five precepts and do the ten wholesome deeds.[45] Then the Buddha states four alternatives: if one keeps them, if there is the other world, one will be reborn in a heavenly abode; even if there is no other world, one will still be praised by the wise for one's good conduct. If one performs only good deeds, no bad deeds, then there is no suffering and one will lead a life without dispute with the world but full of compassion.

Conclusion

After an analysis of the seemingly mystical and metaphysical concepts in Buddhism, we may come to the conclusion that Early Buddhism is rational because it places emphasis on knowing and seeing rather than belief. Just like a physician, the Buddha wanted to cure the illness of suffering so that he is practical and direct. Therefore, in the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* the Buddha says, 'Good, bhikkhus. So you have been guided by me with this Dhamma, which is visible here and now, immediately effective, inviting inspection, onward leading, to be experienced by the wise for themselves.'[46]

[45] CBETA, T01, no. 26, p. 438, b13-p. 439, c22. The same idea is also found in the *Apaṇṇaka Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, MN 60, PTS I 403-404.

[46] Ñāṇamoli / Bodhi (trans.) 1995, 358 (= MN 38, PTS I 265).

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Living in Seclusion and Facing Fear – The Ekottarika-āgama Counterpart to the Bhayabherava-sutta*

Anālayo

Succo secessus bibito
et succo tranquillitatis gustato
terroris et peccati expers fit
jucundum religionis succum bibens.[1]

Abstract

The present paper provides an annotated translation of a discourse from the Chinese *Ekottarika-āgama* that parallels the *Bhayabherava-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*. Central themes taken up in the two discourses are the difficulties of dwelling in seclusion and how to face the arising of fear.

Introduction

Judging from the picture that emerges from a perusal of the early discourses, dwelling in seclusion appears to have been a highly esteemed practice in the thought-world of early Bud-

* I am indebted to Rod Bucknell, Ken Su and Giuliana Martini for comments on a draft of this paper.

1 Dhp 205, rendered into Latin by Fausböll 1855/1974, 37; for an English translation see the end of the article.

dhism.[2] The theme of a secluded way of life is a recurrent topic in the *Sutta-nipāta*, where especially the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* stands out for its poetic portrayal of the beauty of a solitary lifestyle.[3]

The same topic is, however, also prominent elsewhere in the Pāli Nikāyas. Thus according to the *Mahāsuññata-sutta* and its Chinese and Tibetan parallels, for example, one of the rare occasions when the Buddha admonished his personal attendant Ānanda was related to the need of avoiding excessive socializing. The different versions of this discourse agree that the Buddha warned against foregoing seclusion for the sake of company, as this will prevent the development of concentration and the attainment of liberation.[4] In the same vein, according to the

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[2] The actual practice of seclusion comes up in a circumstantial description in the *Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta* and its parallel, which report that some of the Buddha's disciples would join the community only once a fortnight: MN 77 MN II 8,28: "there are disciples of mine who are forest dwellers ... they join the community [only] every half-month", *santi kho pana me ... sāvakā āraññakā* (B^e: *āraññikā*) ... *te anvaddhamāsaṃ* (S^e: *anvaḍḍha°*) *saṃghamajjhe* (C^e and S^e: *saṅgha°*) *osaranti*. MĀ 207 at T I 783a16: "some disciples of mine might join the community [only] once every half-month", 或我弟子過半月一入衆; for a full translation of MĀ 207 cf. Anālayo 2009a.

[3] Sn 35-75, with a Gāndhārī counterpart in Salomon 2000, 105-112, and another parallel in the *Mahāvastu*, Senart 1882, 357,18 - 359,15; cf. also the *Divyāvadāna* in Cowell 1886: 294,13. On the significance of the expression *khaggavisāṇa* cf. Jones 1949/1973, 250 note 1; Edgerton 1953/1998, 202 s.v. *khaḍga-viṣāṇa*; Jayawickrama 1977, 22-23; Norman 1996/2001; Schmithausen 1999, 233 note 13; Salomon 2000, 10-14; Wright 2001, 3-5 and Caillat 2003, 38.

[4] According to MN 122 at MN III 110,24, attaining the happiness of deeper concentration and temporary or perpetual liberation is only possible for a monk who, instead of socializing, "dwells alone and withdrawn from company", *eko gaṇasmā vūpakaṭṭho viharati*. MĀ 191 at T I 738a28 describes such a monk as one who, instead of delighting in company, "always delights in staying alone in remote areas", 常樂獨住遠離處者. The Tibetan version in Skilling 1994, 196,12 similarly speaks of a monk who, instead of delighting in

eight thoughts of a great man, recorded in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* and a range of parallels, the Buddha's teaching is for one who dwells in seclusion, not for one who delights in company.[5]

A discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, together with counterparts in the two main *Saṃyukta-āgama* collections extant in Chinese, presents joining the monastic community as an option for those who do not find solace in seclusion.[6] This conveys

company, "dwells alone apart from company", *tshogs las gcig pu logs shig na gnas pa*.

[5] AN 8.30 at AN IV 229,1: "this Dharma is for one who is secluded, this Dharma is not for one who takes pleasure in socializing", *pavivittassāyaṃ dhammo, nāyaṃ dhammo saṅgaṇikārāmassa*. MĀ 74 at T I 540c24: "the path [manifests] from being secluded, not by delighting in congregation, not by staying in congregation, [the path] is not attained by those who associate with congregations", 道從遠離, 非樂聚會, 非住聚會, 非合聚會得. T 46 at T I 835c17: "the path of the Dharma is [to stay] in hidden away areas, delight in company is not the path", 道法隱處, 樂眾非道. EĀ 42.6 at T II 754a21: "this Dharma is reached by one who properly dwells in seclusion, it is not reached by one who stays among the crowds", 此法應閑居者之所行, 非在憒鬧之所行. A similarly emphatic statement can be found in AN 8.53 at AN IV 280,26 (cf. also Vin II 259,3), according to which whatever leads to seclusion instead of company should categorically be considered as the teaching and discipline taught by the Buddha, *ime dhammā ... pavivekāya saṃvattanti no saṅgaṇikāya ... ekaṃsena ... dhāreyyāsi: 'eso dhammo, eso vinayo etaṃ satthu sāsanan'ti*. Hudson 1976, 103 sums up: "only by solitude ... can one truly approach the Dhamma in its immediacy"; cf. also Anālayo 2009b on various aspects of seclusion, *viveka*.

[6] SN 6.13 at SN I 154,15: "resort to remote lodgings, move towards freedom from the fetters; [but] if one does not find satisfaction therein, [then] dwell in the community, protected and mindful", *sevetha pantāni senāsanāni* (S^e: *sayanāsanāni*), *careyya saṃyojana-vippamokkhā* (C^e: *saññyojana°*), *sa ce ratiṃ nādhigacchaye* (B^e, C^e and S^e: *nādhigaccheyya*) *tattha, saṅghe* (B^e: *saṃghe*) *vase rakkhitatto satimā* (B^e and C^e: *satīmā*). SĀ 1191 at T II 322c24: "practice approaching remote lodgings, eradicate and discard all defilements; [but] if one does not delight in forest dwellings, [then] join the community,

almost the impression as if living in the monastic community is considered something of a second-rate alternative. Though community life was certainly valued in early Buddhist thought, nevertheless, as a verse in the *Sutta-nipāta* proclaims, to train oneself in [dwelling in] seclusion is [reckoned] supreme among noble ones.[7]

Several discourses report that the Buddha himself still went on solitary retreats, which on occasion apparently lasted for a period of two or even three months.[8] According to the *Udumbarika-(sīhanāda)-sutta* and its parallels, a secluded life style is in fact characteristic of all those who have reached awakening.[9]

protecting oneself", 習近邊床座, 斷除諸煩惱, 若不樂空閑, 入衆自攝護 (adopting the variant 床 instead of 林). SĀ[2] 104 at TII 411a11: "being endowed with application to [dwelling] in quiet places one should eradicate the fetters and bondages; [but] if one is not able to delight and rejoice therein, one should return to stay amidst the community", 處靜有敷具, 應斷於結縛, 若不能愛樂, 還應住僧中. On the gradual transition from a wandering life spent mainly in forests and seclusion to a more settled and urban life style during the subsequent development of the Buddhist monastic community cf. Dutt 1962, 53-57; Olivelle 1974, 37-38; Holt 1981/1999, 30-32; and Panabokke 1993, 17-41. Nevertheless, the forest life apparently remained an important factor throughout Buddhist history, thus Ray 1994, 251-292 highlights the importance of the forest life for the early Mahāyāna, while Carrithers 1983 offers an account of the revival of the forest life in modern day Theravāda. Durt 1991, 6 relates "the tendency of Indian monks to settle in urban monasteries more than in forests" to the circumstance that "the development of Indian Buddhism was connected with the expansion of an urban and mercantile civilization".

[7] Sn 822: *vivekaṃ yeva sikkhetha, etad ariyānam uttamaṃ.*

[8] SN 54.11 at SN V 325,19 reports that the Buddha went on a retreat for three months (for other references to the Buddha retiring for a period of similar duration cf. SN 45.12 at SN V 13,8 and Vin III 230,3), whereas the parallel SĀ 807 at T II 207a9 speaks of two months. The *Saṅghabhedavastu* in Gnoli 1978, 204,4 also records an occasion when the Buddha went on a retreat for three months.

[9] DN 25 at DN III 54,11 (B[e], C[e] and S[e] have the title *Udumbarika-sutta*, whereas E[e] reads *Udumbarika-sīhanāda-sutta*) DĀ 8 at T I

The discourses indicate that the Buddha not only enjoyed being by himself, but also practiced seclusion as a way of setting an example for others. The role of the Buddha in this respect is highlighted in the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and its *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel, in which the theme of seclusion and the example set by the Buddha form a recurrent theme.[10]

The *Bhayabherava-sutta,* found as the fourth discourse in the *Majjhima-nikāya*,[11] has as its counterpart the first discourse in the thirty-first chapter of the *Ekottarika-āgama*.[12] The *Ekottarika-āgama* extant in Chinese appears to be the result of a translation undertaken during the period 384-385 of the present era by Zhu Fonian (竺佛念), based on what probably was a Prakrit original of so far undetermined school affiliation transmitted by Dharmanandin.[13] Besides this complete parallel in Chinese translation, sections of a version of this discourse have also been preserved in the form of Sanskrit fragments.[14]

49a20; T 11 at T I 225c18; MĀ 104 at T I 595a24.

[10] MN 4 at MN I 23,34 explains that the two reasons for the Buddha's dwelling in seclusion are: "seeing a pleasant abiding here and now for myself and out of compassion for later generations", *attano ca diṭṭhadhammasukhavihāraṃ sampassamāno pacchimañ ca janataṃ anukampamāno* (cf. also the similar statement in AN 2.3.9 at AN I 60,ult.). EĀ 31.1 at T II 666c24: "dwelling in secluded places [provides a suitable] way of living for myself and at the same time [serves] to deliver incalculable [numbers of] sentient beings", 又自遊閑居之處, 兼度衆生不可稱計.

[11] MN 4 at MN I 16,14 to 24,9.

[12] EĀ 31.1 at T II 665b17 to T II 667a3, sections of which have already been translated by Bareau 1963, 37-39 and 68.

[13] For a more detailed discussion of the somewhat complex issue of the translators and school affiliation of this collection cf. Anālayo 2009c; on the language of the original Waldschmidt 1980, 137 comments that the *Ekottarika-āgama* was translated "from some Middle Indic or mixed dialect of Prakrit with Sanskrit elements".

[14] SHT I 164c+g in Waldschmidt 1965, 93 (identified by Schlingloff 1967, 421); SHT IV 32 folio 33-41 in Sander 1980, 130-34; SHT IV 165 folio 15-16 in Sander 1980, 190f; SHT IV 500 folio 4 in Sander

Translation[15]

On the Higher [Mind][16]

1. [I] heard like this. At one time the Buddha was staying at Sāvatthī in Jeta's Grove, the park [given by] Anāthapiṇḍika.

2. At that time, the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi approached the Blessed One, exchanged greetings and sat down to one side. Then the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi said to the Blessed One: "To stay in secluded dwellings, caves and [solitary] places [can] be very unpleasant, going by oneself to stay alone and apply the mind is very difficult."[17]

The Blessed One said: "It is like this, Brahmin, as you said, [to stay in] secluded dwellings, caves and [solitary] places [can]

1980, 222; and SHT IX 2401 in Bechert 2004, 195. A reference to the present discourse as the (*bhaya*)[*bh*]*airavaparyāye* can be found in SHT I 36 A2 in Waldschmidt 1965, 27 and in SHT IV 36 V2 in Sander 1980, 259.

[15] For ease of comparison I adopt the paragraph numbering used in the English translation of the *Bhayabherava-sutta* in Ñāṇamoli 1995/2005, 102-7. For the same reason, I employ Pāli terminology (except for anglicized terms like 'Dharma' or 'Nirvana'), without thereby intending to take a position on the original language of the *Ekottarika-āgama*.

[16] The summary verse at T II 673c11 refers to EĀ 31.1 as "higher", 增上, which I take to be an abbreviation of 增上之心, the "higher mind" (equivalent to *adhicitta*), mentioned in EĀ 31.1 at T II 666b21, hence my reconstruction of the title as "On the Higher [Mind]". MN 4 instead has the title "Discourse on Fear and Dread", *Bhayabherava-sutta*.

[17] In MN 4 at MN I 16,20 the Brahmin first takes up the topic of the Buddha's role in regard to his disciples and only after that turns to the difficulties of dwelling in seclusion. MN 4 also does not mention caves and differs in so far as at MN I 16,ult. the Brahmin concludes that "one would think the forests will rob a monk, who has not attained concentration, of his mind", *haranti maññe mano vanāni samādhiṃ alabhamānassa bhikkhuno*.

be very unpleasant, going by oneself to stay alone and apply the mind is very difficult.

3. Thus in the past, at the time when I had not yet completed the path to Buddhahood and was still practising as a bodhisattva, I regularly reflected like this: 'To stay in secluded dwellings,[18] caves and [solitary] places [can] be very unpleasant, going by oneself to stay alone and apply the mind is very difficult'."

The Brahmin said to the Buddha: "Suppose there are sons of good family, who out of firm faith leave the household life to train in the path, [among them] the recluse Gotama at present acts as a superior leader, being of much benefit by giving these types of beginners encouragement and guidance."

The Blessed One said: "It is like this, Brahmin, as you said, for whatever sons of good family, who out of firm faith leave the household life to train in the path, I act as a superior leader, being of much benefit by giving these types of beginners encouragement and guidance [665c], since on seeing me they all arouse a sense of discomfiture and [thereon] approach secluded dwellings, caves and [solitary] places amidst mountains or marshes.[19]

4. At the time [when I was still a bodhisattva], I then had the following reflection: 'Any recluses or Brahmins whose bodily conduct is impure and who withdraw to secluded dwellings and solitary places with impure bodily conduct, their efforts are in vain, their practice is not genuine, [they will experience] fear as well as evil and unwholesome states.[20] But I now withdraw into

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[18] Adopting the variant 居 instead of 靜, in accordance with the two earlier instances of this phrase.

[19] The second part of this passage, beginning with "since on seeing me ...", is without a counterpart in MN 4. The point this passage makes appears to be the arousing of *saṃvega* in the disciples on seeing the example set by the Buddha; on *saṃvega* cf. also Coomaraswamy 1943.

[20] MN 4 at MN I 17,14 only mentions the manifestation of unwholesome fear and dread as a consequence of withdrawing into seclusion

secluded dwellings and [solitary] places with a bodily conduct that is not impure. To withdraw into secluded and quiet places with any impure bodily conduct is not found in me. Thus my bodily conduct is pure now. For arahants who have purity of bodily conduct and who delight in secluded dwellings, caves and [solitary] places, I act as a supreme leader.'[21] Like this, Brahmin, seeing in myself such purity of bodily conduct, I delight in living in secluded dwelling places, [experiencing] increasing joy.

5-7. At the time [when I was still a bodhisattva], I then had the following reflection: 'Any recluses or Brahmins, whose mental conduct is impure,[22] or whose livelihood is impure, and who withdraw into secluded dwellings and solitary places, even though they practice like this, yet [their practice] is not genuine, [as] they are filled with all [kinds] of evil and unwholesome

with impure bodily conduct, without referring to the vanity of such efforts and the lack of genuineness of such practice.

[21] Instead of highlighting the Buddha's role as a leader among arahants of pure bodily conduct, MN 4 at MN I 17,17 points out that the Buddha is one among noble ones of pure bodily conduct (who withdraw into seclusion), *ye hi vo ariyā parisuddhakāyakammantā ... tesam ahaṃ aññatamo* (B[e] and S[e]: *aññataro*).

[22] While in the present passage EĀ 31.1 at T II 665c11 only mentions mental conduct, its subsequent exposition also covers verbal conduct (the counterpart to the present passage in MN 4 at MN I 17,23 already refers to impurity of verbal conduct, *aparisuddhavacīkammanta*). Such irregularities are a common feature of *Ekottarika-āgama* discourses, evident right away in the next line of EĀ 31.1 at T II 665c12, where the earlier mentioned fear as a consequence of resorting to seclusion with impure conduct is no longer found (though fear would be implicit in the general reference to "evil and unwholesome states"). Zürcher 1991, 288 explains that in early translations in general "there is a strong tendency to avoid the monotonous effect of ... verbatim repetition ... by introducing a certain amount of diversification and irregularity", as a result of which "in the same translated scripture we often find various alternative forms and longer or shorter versions of the same cliché".

states. That is not found in me. Thus my bodily, verbal and mental conduct, as well as my livelihood, are pure now. Whatever recluses or Brahmins,[23] who have bodily, verbal and mental purity, as well as purity of livelihood, they delight in staying in seclusion and in dwelling with purity in [solitary] places. That is the case with me. Thus I now have purity of bodily, verbal and mental conduct, as well as purity of livelihood. For whatever arahants that have bodily, verbal and mental purity, as well as purity of livelihood, and who delight in staying in seclusion and in quiet places, I act as a superior leader.' Like this, Brahmin, given that I have bodily, verbal and mental purity, as well as purity of livelihood, when staying in seclusion and in quiet places I [experience] increasing joy.

14.[24] At the time [when I was still a bodhisattva], I then had the following reflection: '[Some] so-called recluses or Brahmins are much affected by fear and dread. [When] they stay in seclusion and in quiet places, at that time they then [experience] fear and dread, evil and unwholesome states. But I now am never affected by fear when staying in solitary seclusion and quiet places.' [Whereas some] so-called recluses or Brahmins have a mind [filled with] fear and dread [when] staying in secluded and quiet places,[25] in me that is not found. Thus I now never have fear and dread. I enjoy staying in secluded and quiet places. Whatever fear and dread [may arise] in the mind while staying

[23] Adopting a variant that adds 諸 before 有.

[24] MN 4 at MN I 17,32 (§§ 8-12 in Ñāṇamoli 1995/2005, 103) lists mental obstructions corresponding to the five hindrances as causes for the arising of fear when withdrawing into seclusion, with *abhijjhālu kāmesu tibbasārāga* as first, *uddhata avūpasantacitta* (C^{e}: *avupasanta°*) as fourth and *kaṅkhī vecikicchī* (B^{e} and S^{e}: *vicikicchī*) as fifth, thus not employing the standard terms used in enumerations of the five hindrances. These five mental obstructions are without a counterpart in EĀ 31.1. Next MN 4 at MN I 19,3 (§ 13 in Ñāṇamoli 1995/2005, 103) refers to self-praise, mentioned in EĀ 31.1 at T II 665c28 after fear (§ 14).

[25] Adopting the variant 者 instead of 謂.

in secluded dwellings, that is not found in me.[26] Thus I am already free from such suffering and misery,[27] no longer being affected in the same way [as those recluses and Brahmins]. Like this, Brahmin, having seen this benefit of being without fear, I [experience] increasing joy.

13. Any recluses or Brahmins who denigrate others and [unduly] exalt themselves, even though they stay in secluded dwellings and [solitary] places, yet they have impure perceptions.[28] But I, Brahmin, do not denigrate others [666a], nor do I [unduly] exalt myself. Any [undue] self-exaltation or denigration of others is not found in me. Thus, because I am now without arrogance, I act as a superior leader for noble beings who are without arrogance. Having seen this benefit, I [experience] increasing joy.

15. Any recluses [and Brahmins], who seek for material benefits, cannot bring themselves to rest.[29] But I now am without any seeking for material benefits. Thus I am one without seeking now, who is contented on his own.[30] For those who are contented on their own, I act as a superior leader. Having seen this benefit, I [experience] increasing joy.

[26] Adopting a variant that adds 有 after 我.

[27] Adopting the variant 已 instead of 以.

[28] MN 4 at MN I 19,5 does not refer to impure perceptions, instead of which it mentions – as is the case throughout its exposition – the problem of unwholesome fear and dread.

[29] MN 4 at MN I 19,21 does not draw out the repercussions of being desirous of material gains (or of honour and fame, also mentioned in MN 4). The commentary on the present passage, Ps I 117,5, records an entertaining story of a monk who went to stay in a cemetery so as to become known as an undertaker of ascetic practices and thereby acquire material gains (dwelling in a cemetery, described in detail in Vism 76,15, occurs in different listings of ascetic practices, for surveys of such listings cf. Bapat 1937, Dantinne 1991, 24-30 and Ray 1994, 293-323). After it had become dark, a ruminating ox so frightened him that he spent the whole night without getting any rest, a tale thus illustrating the theme of lack of rest also mentioned in EĀ 31.1.

[30] Adopting the variant 自 instead of 同.

16. Any recluses or Brahmins, whose minds are lazy, will not be energetic [when] frequenting secluded and quiet places. That is not found in me. Thus I now have a mind full of vigour. Therefore among noble ones who are not lazy, who have a mind full of vigour, I act as a superior leader. Having seen this benefit in myself, I [experience] increasing joy.

17. At the time [when I was still a bodhisattva], I moreover had the following reflection: 'Any recluses or Brahmins who are often forgetful and who dwell in secluded places,[31] even though they practice like this, yet, they will be possessed of evil and unwholesome states. But I now am free from forgetfulness. Again, Brahmin, to be one who is forgetful, that is not found in me. For those noble ones who are not forgetful, I act as a superior leader.' Having now seen this benefit, I [experience] increasing joy when staying in secluded dwelling places.

18. At the time [when I was still a bodhisattva], I moreover had the following reflection: 'Any recluses or Brahmins whose mind is scattered and not concentrated, they will then be possessed of evil and unwholesome states and take part in evil practices. But my mind now is totally free from being scattered, [I] am constantly with a one-pointed mind. Any scattered mind and lack of concentration is not found in me. Thus I have constantly a one-pointed mind. For noble ones with unified and concentrated mind, I act as a superior leader.' Having now seen this benefit,[32] if I dwell in secluded quiet places I [experience] increasing joy.

19. At the time [when I was still a bodhisattva] I moreover had the following reflection: 'Any recluses or Brahmins who are ignorant and dull, like a herd of sheep,[33] those men will then be possessed of evil and unwholesome states. That is not found in

[31] MN 4 at MN I 20,1 mentions being "forgetful", *muṭṭhassati*, and "without clear comprehension", *asampajāna*.
[32] Adopting a variant that adds 義 after 此.
[33] The comparison with a herd of sheep is not found in MN 4.

me. I now am constantly endowed with wisdom, I have no ignorance. Staying in secluded dwellings and being endowed with conduct like this, that is found in me. I now have accomplished wisdom. For those noble beings who have accomplished wisdom, I act as a superior leader.' Having now seen this benefit, if I stay in secluded dwellings I [experience] increasing joy.

20. While I was staying in secluded dwellings,[34] if the branch of a tree broke, [or] a bird or an animal ran by, at that time I had the following thought: 'This is [what causes] great fear in a forest' [666b]. Then again I had the following thought: 'If fear comes, I should seek a means to prevent it coming again.'

If fear and dread came while I was walking, then at that time I did not sit or lie down, determining to discard that fear and dread, and [only] afterwards sitting down. Suppose fear and dread came when I was standing, then at that time I did not walk or sit down, determining to discard that fear and dread, and [only] afterwards sitting down. If fear and dread came at the time when I was sitting, [then] I did not walk, determining to discard that fear and dread, and [only] afterwards walking.[35] If fear and dread came when I was lying down, then at that time I did not walk or even sit up, determining to discard that fear and dread,[36] and [only] afterwards sitting up.[37]

[34] MN 4 at MN I 20,27 speaks of going on purpose to *cetiya*s on auspicious nights (on which cf. Dietz 1997) in order to experience fear. According to von Simson 1995, 172, "the powers of nature and the sacredness of place and time are as unimportant in the Buddhist doctrine as are the year myths and fertility rites". Thus this specification in MN 4 strikes an unfamiliar note (though it needs to be kept in mind that it refers to the Buddha's pre-awakening experiences). In contrast, the presentation in EĀ 31.1 at T II 666a28 is quite straightforward and suffices for the continuity of the discourse, in that the arising of fear caused by the noise of animals may happen at any secluded place, without needing to seek for it on specific nights at specific places.

[35] Adopting the varian 行 instead of 坐.

[36] Adopting a variant without 使.

[37] Adopting the variant 坐 instead of 臥.

21. Brahmin, you should know: Whatever recluses and Brahmins who throughout day and night do not understand the path of the Dharma, I now declare that those men are thoroughly deluded.[38] But I, Brahmin, throughout day and night understand the path of the Dharma, having an energetic mind that is not deceived.

22-23. With a mind that is not scattered, with a constantly one-pointed mind, free from perceptions of sensual desire, with [directed] awareness and [continuous] observation, remaining with mindfulness and rapture,[39] being happy,[40] I dwelled in the first absorption. This, Brahmin, is reckoned the first [higher state of] mind that for me constitutes a condition of happiness here and now.[41]

24. Discarding [directed] awareness and [continuous] observation, with internal joy and rapture, with a one-pointed mind that is free from [directed] awareness and observation, concentrated, mindful and rapturous,[42] I dwelled in the second absorption. This, Brahmin, is reckoned the second [higher state of] mind that leads to obtaining happiness here and now.

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[38] MN 4 at MN I 21,20 instead speaks of recluses and Brahmins who mistake night for day and day for night (cf. also SHT IV 32 folio 37 V2 in Sander 1980, 131), for a discussion of this difference cf. Anālayo 2005, 2-3.

[39] Adopting the variant 待 instead of 持.

[40] MN 4 at MN I 21,35 qualifies the happiness and rapture experienced with the first absorption as "born of seclusion", *vivekaja*.

[41] This specification, which relates the development of absorption to the recurrent theme of dwelling in joy (as a result of withdrawing into seclusion), is without a counterpart in MN 4. A recurrent reference in the Sanskrit fragments to *sparśavihāra* suggests that the Sanskrit version had a specification similar to EĀ 31.1, cf. SHT IV 165 folio 15 V8 and R1 in Sander 1980, 190 and SHT IX 2401 Vd in Bechert 2004, 195.

[42] MN 4 at MN I 21,ult. qualifies the second absorption as a mental condition of "inner confidence/serenity", *ajjhatta sampasāda*.

25. Seeing and knowing within myself the absence of any desirous attention, aware of bodily pleasure, as is wished by noble ones,[43] guarding mindfulness and happiness, I dwelled in the third absorption. This, Brahmin, is reckoned the third [higher state of] mind [that leads to obtaining happiness here and now].

26. Again, having left behind pleasure and pain, being without any delight or sadness, free from pleasure and pain, guarding mindfulness and purity, I dwelled in the fourth absorption. This is reckoned, Brahmin, the fourth higher [state of] mind, with awareness and knowledge proceeding on their own in accordance with the mind.[44]

27. Then, while staying in a secluded dwelling and being in the possession of these four higher [states of] mind, with this concentrated mind, flawlessly pure, free from fettering influences, having obtained fearlessness, I cognised my former lives during countless aeons. At that time I recollected my former lives: One birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, aeons of arising and dissolution, in all their details, [recollecting that]: 'I formerly arose there, with such a given name, such a family name, partaking of food like this, experiencing pleasure and pain like this, passing away from there I was reborn here, dying here I was reborn there' – from beginning to end I completely understood the causes and conditions.[45]

28. Brahmin, you should know that during the first period of the night I attained this first [higher] knowledge [666c], dis-

[43] According to MN 4 at MN I 22,4, noble ones describe this state as a dwelling in happiness with mindfulness and equanimity.
[44] This sentence is without a counterpart in MN 4.
[45] A reference to causes and conditions is not found in MN 4. According to the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli 1977, 118,11, the pre-awakening knowledge of recollecting his past lives indeed stimulated the future Buddha's investigation of the causes underlying the process of rebirth.

carding ignorance and no longer [being subject] to obscuration, with a mind that delights in dwelling in seclusion and that knows and is aware on its own.[46]

29. Again, relying on this concentrated mind, with its flawlessness and freedom from fettering influences, a mind that is rightly concentrated and has obtained fearlessness, [I] moreover came to know the arising and passing away of beings. With the divine eye I moreover saw beings of various types being born and passing away, of pleasant or unpleasant appearance, with good or bad destinies, good-looking or ugly, in accordance with their wholesome or evil conduct, I thoroughly knew them all in detail [thus]: Whatever living beings have undertaken evil bodily, verbal or mental conduct, have slandered noble ones and been continuously of wrong view, partaking [in conduct] that accords with wrong view, with the destruction of the body at death they are reborn in hell. Whatever living beings have undertaken wholesome bodily, verbal or mental conduct, who have not slandered noble ones and continuously been of right view, partaking [in conduct] that accords with right view, with the destruction of the body at death they are reborn in a higher heavenly realm. Thus with the divine eye that is flawless and purified I saw beings of various types being born and passing away, of pleasant or unpleasant appearance, with good or bad destinies, being good-looking or ugly, in accordance with their former conduct, I knew them all thoroughly.

30. Brahmin, you should know that during the middle period of the night I attained this second [higher] knowledge, no longer [being subject] to obscuration, with a mind that delights in secluded dwellings and that knows and is aware on its own.

31. Again, relying on this concentrated mind, with its flawless purity and freedom from fettering influences, a state of mind

[46] This specification, which relates each of the higher knowledges to the main theme of joyfully dwelling in seclusion, is without a counterpart in MN 4.

that has reached concentration and has obtained fearlessness, I attained the destruction of the mental influxes. I knew *dukkha* as it really is, not falsely.[47]

32. Then, at that time, when I attained this type of mental condition, the mind attained liberation from the influx of sensuality, from the influx of existence and from the influx of ignorance. By attaining liberation I attained knowledge of liberation, knowing as it really is that: 'Birth and death have been destroyed, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done, there will be no more coming to [any] womb.'

33. This, Brahmin, is reckoned the third [higher] knowledge that I attained in the last period of the night, no longer [being subject] to obscuration.

34. How is it, Brahmin, do you have this type of thought: 'The Tathāgata [still] has sensuality, ill-will and ignorance in his mind? Without having eradicated these he stays in secluded dwelling places?' Brahmin, you should not see it like this. Thus the Tathāgata now has discarded all influxes forever, he continually delights in secluded dwellings and not in the company of men. Because I have now seen two benefits,[48] I delight in secluded dwellings and [solitary] places. What two? Dwelling in secluded places [provides a suitable] way of living for myself

[47] EĀ 31.1 at T II 666c16: 知此苦如實不虛, whereas MN 4 at MN I 23,14 applies the full scheme of the four noble truths to *dukkha* and to the influxes (*āsava*). Nakamura 2000, 211 holds that the lack of a reference to the four noble truths indicates that their occurrence in MN 4 "must be a later addition". In view of the centrality in the early teachings of the scheme of the four noble truths this seems less probable (on the epithet "noble" in this context cf. Norman 1984, Norman 1990/1993 and Anālayo 2006). A more plausible explanation would be to assume that the passage in EĀ 31.1 is an abbreviation of the full statement and thus has only preserved the first part corresponding to *idaṃ dukkhan'ti yathābhūtaṃ abbhaññāsiṃ*.

[48] Adopting a variant that adds 二 after 此.

and at the same time [serves] to deliver incalculable [numbers of] sentient beings."[49]

35. At that time, the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi said to the Buddha: "Out of compassion for living beings you [are willing to] deliver them all."[50] The Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi further said to the Buddha: "Enough, Blessed One, enough, what has been said suffices, just as if something crooked had been straightened up,[51] [as if] someone who had gone astray had found the [right] path, [as if] a blind person had obtained eyes,[52] as if seeing a light in the darkness, like this the recluse Gotama has taught the Dharma with innumerable expedient means [667a]. I now go for refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma and the community, and from now on take on myself to observe the five precepts of no more killing beings [etc.], having become a lay disciple."[53]

At that time the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi, having heard what the Buddha said, was delighted and received it respectfully.

[49] See above note 10.

[50] A reference to delivering all beings is not found in MN 4.

[51] Adopting the variant 伸 instead of 申.

[52] The image of a blind person regaining eye-sight is not found in MN 4.

[53] MN 4 at MN I 24,7 also reports that he took refuge, though notably SHT IV 32 folio 41 R3-4 in Sander 1980, 134 gives the impression as if the Sanskrit version did not record his taking of refuge (in fact the editors ibid. remark that "damit endet, abweichend vom Pāli, wo Jāṇussoṇi Laienanhänger wird, das Bhayabhairavasūtra"). A number of other Pāli discourses also report that the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi took refuge, cf. MN 27 at MN I 184,16; SN 12.47 at SN II 77,1; AN 2.2.7 at AN I 57,15; AN 3.55 at AN I 159,21; AN 3.59 at AN I 168,7; AN 4.184 at AN II 176,5; AN 6.52 at AN III 364,3; AN 7.47 at AN IV 56,18; AN 10.119 at AN V 236,1; AN 10.167 at AN V 251,24; and AN 10.177 at AN V 273,13. Tsuchida 1991, 77 comments that this "warns us against using the canonical narratives as ... historical sources without due critical considerations".

Comparison

From the perspective of the main theme of the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and its *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel, a noteworthy difference can be found in the respective introductory sections.[54] Though the parallel versions agree on the two main points made by the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi, they differ on the sequence in which he presents them.

According to the *Bhayabherava-sutta*, Jāṇussoṇi begins by referring to the Buddha's role as a guide for his disciples, after which the Brahmin takes up the topic of the difficulties when living in seclusion. On reading the Pāli account, these two points appear like two separate ideas.

In the *Ekottarika-āgama* account, however, Jāṇussoṇi first turns to the difficulties of living in seclusion and then proceeds to the Buddha's role in providing guidance and encouragement to his disciples. In reply, the Buddha then explains that it is precisely due to seeing his secluded lifestyle that his disciples get inspired to resort to secluded dwellings themselves. In this way, in the *Ekottarika-āgama* version a relationship between the two statements emerges: The disciples face the difficulties of living in seclusion because they are inspired by the example set for them by the Buddha.[55]

The perspective that the *Ekottarika-āgama* version provides in this way suits the remainder of both discourses well, where the autobiographical account of the Buddha's own practice of seclusion and consequent attainment of absorption and libera-

[54] Lack of space does not allow a more detailed study of differences between the two versions, some of which will be examined in my forthcoming comparative study of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, scheduled for publication in 2011.

[55] That fear was indeed considered a problem can be deduced from the *Ākaṅkheyya-sutta* and its parallels, where absence of fear occurs among a range of wishes a monk might have, MN 6 at MN I 33,26, AN 10.71 at AN V 132,17 and MĀ 105 at T I 596a3.

tion fills out in detail what makes him a guide and inspiration for his disciples.

Another difference germane to the same theme occurs in relation to the contrast made in both versions between recluses or Brahmins who retire into seclusion without having established the required level of purity, compared to the Buddha's way of dwelling in solitude. While the *Bhayabherava-sutta* keeps reiterating that lack of purity or the presence of mental defilements will result in the experience of unwholesome fear and dread, the *Ekottarika-āgama* version is less consistent in this respect. Here the Pāli version brings out a central theme with more clarity, namely the fearfulness of seclusion.[56]

Yet another difference can be found in relation to the Buddha's attainment of the four absorptions, which the *Ekottarika-āgama* version presents as his experience of happiness here and now, thus linking them more closely to the main theme of the joy that can result from dwelling in seclusion.[57] The same difference recurs in relation to the three higher knowledges, where the *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse again makes a point of indicating that their attainment comes about in a mind that has reached fearlessness and that delights in dwelling in seclusion.[58]

Keeping in mind the complementary perspectives provided by the parallel versions in each of these instances helps to get a clearer grasp of the central message of the discourse. Following the *Ekottarika-āgama* version's introductory account, the topic the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi had on his mind would have been the fearfulness of dwelling in seclusion. The continuity of the discourse then reveals the Buddha's role as a source of guidance

[56] To appreciate the significance of this topic, it needs to be kept in mind that from an ancient Indian perspective – as reflected in early Buddhist texts – nature is often seen as dangerous and threatening, cf. Boucher 2008, 54 and Schmithausen 1991, 29 and 1997, 24.
[57] See above note 41.
[58] See above note 46.

that inspires his disciples to brave this fearful condition,[59] a role taken up again at the end of both versions, when the Buddha points out that one of the two reasons for his secluded lifestyle is to provide an example to be emulated.

Another factor that counters fear – treated in detail in both versions – is purity of conduct,[60] together with purity of the mind by overcoming a whole host of mental defilements.[61] The basic point made in this way is that fear often can be a reflection of the condition of one's own mind. Where the presence of defilements or even of misconduct will naturally evoke fear on any possible occasion, to the degree to which purification has

[59] The role of recollecting the Buddha as a source of fearlessness is also prominent in the *Dhajagga-sutta* and its parallels: SN 11.3 at SN I 219,27; SĀ 980 at T II 254c19; SĀ 981 at T II 255a26; EĀ 24.1 at T II 615a17; for Sanskrit parallels cf. Waldschmidt 1932, 47, Waldschmidt 1959/1967, 379, Sander 1987, 137, SHT VII 1687A in Bechert 1995, 96; Wille 2006, 118; for Tibetan parallels cf. Skilling 1994, 268,7 and 292,1, for parallels found as *sūtra* quotations cf. the survey in Skilling 1997, 403f. Harrison 1992/1993, 218 comments that the *Dhajagga-sutta* shows that "as a specific remedy against fear when meditating in wild and solitary places ... the practice of *buddhānussati* must have assumed quite early on the nature of an apotropaic technique".

[60] The importance of a foundation in proper conduct for being able to dwell in seclusion is highlighted in the *Bhaddāli-sutta* and its parallel, MN 65 at MN I 440,17 and MĀ 194 at T I 747c6.

[61] For a survey of these cf. Weerasinghe 1997, 615f. Though this does indicate the need for a certain degree of maturity in order to be able to withdraw into seclusion (cf. also AN 10.99 at AN V 202,4 and Ud 4.1 at Ud 35,18), it is noteworthy that in AN 5.114 at AN III 138,27 already new monks (*nava acirapabbajita*) are encouraged to withdraw into seclusion in forests. In fact Vin I 92,22 makes a special allowance for a newly ordained monk to be exempted from the otherwise obligatory need to live in dependence on a teacher if he finds solace in living in seclusion in a remote forest dwelling. Thus the need for some degree of maturity before withdrawing into seclusion does not appear to imply that dwelling in seclusion is only meant for the few whose task has nearly been completed.

been undertaken, fear will be less prone to manifest. A mind at peace within, resting in ethical blamelessness and the removal of mental defilements, will find joy instead of fear in solitude.

Besides internal factors, however, external factors can also cause the arising of fear. In such a case, both versions recommend facing fear as and when it occurs. The two discourses make it clear that this requires remaining in whatever posture one is when fear arises. Thus, instead of reacting to what has caused the fear, one faces the mental condition of fear itself. This brings into play a key factor of mindfulness practice described in similar ways in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* and its *Madhyama-āgama* counterpart, where the task of mindfulness it to remain aware of the presence of a defilement or hindrance in the mind.[62]

By in this way facing fear when it arises and continuing to purify the mind, the joy of seclusion will eventually culminate in the intense forms of happiness and bliss to be experienced through the absorptions and the supreme happiness of liberation. In this way, the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and its *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel throw into relief the importance of living in seclusion and facing fear as essential ingredients of the path to awakening.

"Having savoured the taste of seclusion,
The taste of [inner] peace,
[One] is free from anxiety and evil,
Savouring the joyful taste of the Dharma."[63]

[62] MN 10 at MN I 60,11 (= DN 22 at DN II 300,10) and MĀ 98 at T I 584a24. Another parallel, EĀ 12.1 at T II 568a9, merely lists the five hindrances without giving detailed instructions. For a study of these discourses cf. Kuan 2008.

[63] Dhp 205 (cf. also Sn 257): *pavivekarasaṃ pītvā* (B^{e}: *pitvā*), *rasaṃ upasamassa ca, niddaro hoti nippāpo, dhammapītirasaṃ pivaṃ* (C^{e}: *pibaṃ*), which has a counterpart in *Udāna(-varga)* verse 28.5 in Bernhard 1965, 355: *pravivekarasaṃ jñātvā, rasaṃ copaśamasya vai, nirjvaro bhavati niṣpāpo, dharmaprītirasaṃ piban*, trsl. in Hahn 2007,

101 as "hat er den Geschmack der Abgeschiedenheit gekostet und kennt er den Geschmack der Abgeklärtheit, wird fieberfrei, wer ohne Bosheit ist, wenn er den Saft der Freude an der Lehre trinkt". The Chinese parallels in T 212 at T IV 742c10 and T 213 at T IV 792a25 read: 解知念待味，思惟休息義，無熱無飢想，當服於法味, trsl. in Willemen 1978, 125 as "when one has realized the flavour of seclusion, and reflects on the meaningfulness of calmness, when one has no fever, no notion of hunger, he will drink the flavour of the law". The Tibetan parallel in Beckh 1911, 98 or Zongtse 1990, 288 reads: *legs par nyer zhi'i ro dang ni, rab tu dben pa'i ro shes pa, rims nad med cing sdig med la, chos la dga' ba'i ro dag 'thung*; trsl. in Rockhill 1883/1975, 133 as "he (the elect) knows the sweetness of perfect peace, the sweetness of solitude; free from disease, without sin, he drinks the sweetness of delighting in the law" (similarly trsl. in Iyer 1986, 331); while Sparham 1983/1986, 140 renders the same as "tasting the excellent flavour, of peace and complete detachment, plagues and evil are no more: the taste of liking dharma is imbibed".

Abbreviations

AN	*Aṅguttara-nikāya*
B^{e}	Burmese edition
C^{e}	Ceylonese edition
CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association
DĀ	*Dīrgha-āgama* (T 1)
Dhp	*Dhammapada*
DN	*Dīgha-nikāya*
E^{e}	PTS edition
EĀ	*Ekottarika-āgama* (T 125)
MĀ	*Madhyama-āgama* (T 26)
MN	*Majjhima-nikāya*
Ps	*Papañcasūdanī*
S^{e}	Siamese edition
SĀ	*Saṃyukta-āgama* (T 99)
SĀ^{2}	'other' *Saṃyukta-āgama* (T 100)
SHT	Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden
SN	*Saṃyutta-nikāya*
Sn	*Sutta-nipāta*
T	Taishō (CBETA)
Ud	*Udāna*
Vin	*Vinaya*
Vism	*Visuddhimagga*

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Index of Proper Names

Names in *italics* denote contemporaries of the Buddha. Persons listed in bibliographies were not considered.